

Femme Fatales

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BABES OF MARVEL'S X-MEN



ANNA PAQUIN

AMANDA TAPPING
STARGATE SG-1

PAULA PRENTISS

JASON X

CLAUDIA JENNINGS, DRIVE-IN DIVA

Warning: No Nudity



ATTRACTIONS F A T A L E

By Dan Scapperotti

●Columbia Pictures will release THE HOLLOW MAN, Paul Verhoeven's sci-fi thriller, on July 23th. A genre of brilliant sci-fi, offset by Sebastian Casse (Kevin Bacon), unlock the secret of invisibility at a covert military base. The egomaniac Casse recklessly volunteers to turn guinea pig but realizes, too late, that the process can't be reversed. Oscar nominee Elizabeth Shue (LEAVING LAS VEGAS) co-stars as Linda McKay, a fellow scientist whose prognosis is pretty grim. The transparent Casse's condition is driving her insane.

"Linda is somebody who always wanted to be a leader," said Shue. "She was very capable of assuming the role, but was working in Sebastian's shadow and never allowed to be in a position of authority. It's only when the experiment on Sebastian goes wrong that she's able to take charge. Ultimately it's Linda's responsibility to stop Sebastian and save herself." Verhoeven was determined to cast an actress who could embody warmth and strength. "I originally had the idea of portraying Linda as a more formidable heroine," said the director. "She's not like a robot or a typical screen action hero, but—as we unfold in the screenplay—Linda was a rather strong character. When I first approached Elizabeth Shue about playing the part, she felt very emphatically that she should be a person who would also be understandable to us as a human being and not be too over the top. I realized that I could use her vulnerability and, at the same time, depict her as stronger than you're used to seeing her. We decided to portray Linda as a more multi-dimensional character."

●Facing new foes in Mulder and Scully: 20th Century-Fox has released a DVD collection of the X-FILES. The seven volume set includes all 24 episodes from the first season, including the original series pilot. Priced at \$149.99, the seventh disk offers bonus material: an 11-minute documentary, a 36 minute interview with series creator Chris Carter and a DVD-ROM game, "Seeds of Deception," which integrates information from season #1 and affords fans an opportunity to solve their own X-Files enigmas.

●FF cover woman: Teri McCue (6'4") is hostess of WHAT'S SHOOTING IN HOLLYWOOD. "It's rather



Elizabeth Shue stars in THE HOLLOW MAN (Kevin Bacon). The Oscar nominee's other genre credits include LINK and BACK TO THE FUTURE, Parts 2 & 3.

akin to ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT but tailored for the internet," explains McClure. Tap into www.nethisv.com. The erotic thriller dives in "to the post-production phase of TRANCE, which I produced. I've also recently been cast in SHADOW HOURS with Rebecca Gayheart and Peter Weiler. I play a stripper."

●Horror icon Linnea Quigley (1-1 & 64), who earned cult addition with her "groovyday stigmatized" (RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD), is going multi-media. "I just pressed a CD titled Surfboards and Chaiseuses," says Quigley. "We've also compiled a behind-the-scenes video of my new movie. It chronicles the making of JACK-O, VICE ACADÉMIE, and others." Tap into www.linneaquigley.com for further info.

Upon wrapping VENICE BEACH ("It's a good little film"), Quigley stepped into a romance lesson with publisher A Goldstein. "I know we're in love," says the actress. "He's an unbelievable man. When we were introduced at a luncheon, I didn't know anything about A! and he didn't know anything about me. A few weeks later, we met again for brunch and we just clicked." The couple's affair of a moment was leaked on the Fox News Channel. Wish you such happiness, amigos.

Quigley is currently working on HELLOQUEST. For a preview, tap into www.helloquest.com.

●Ad Babs and Richard Gabai produced MEN NAMED MILO,

WOMEN NAMED GRETA, a short film which premiered at the Sundance Festival. "It's like, 'What if Robin Altman directed an episode of THE TWILIGHT ZONE?'" says Babs. "It's weird and funny and provocative. Incidentally, there are no dialogues named Milo or Greta in the picture."

Wetman address Oscar nominee (FF cover woman) (2-1) Sally Kirkland makes a special appearance. "She came down and did a wonderful, hilarious improv scene for us," said Babs. "Sally has appeared in some experimental We had films, so we thought it would be a good idea to have her in a cameo role, writing for her turn-around in the underground film brought by the Michael Dee Barnes character. It took a little longer to get to her scene than we had hoped, so Sally used her frustration with being left waiting as a start off point for the improvisation. I wish we could have used all of the stuff she did for us, because it was brilliant. But we just couldn't fit it in."

●Taffie O'Connell (8-4), the always appetizer for hungry aliens (GALAXY OF TERROR), is shooting in a TV pilot titled HEROES: "It's lured on a sci-fi comic comic," says O'Connell. "I'm cast as the very sexy German gal, not unlike the femme fatale that I played in HOT CHILL."

●With retired judges drawing substantive Nielsen numbers on TV, Playboy Home Video has applied its own spin to the genre with SEX COURT, which is making a transition into a third season. Even while the project was in develop-

ment, the first and only choice to sit on the bench was 8-film covergirl Julie Strain (3-2). The cable network show is carried up to 30 times a month on the Playboy Channel. Two or three additional installations are added to the mix each month. "I get to lay down the law and make people do tricks," said "Judge Julie" Strain. "The found my niche: I have a little bar/it and her name is Alexandra Sak. She comes in, pulls up her skirt and makes the people place their hands on her butt and swear it. It's funny. It's like 'Jeremy Jones Meets Judge Judy on ecstasy.'"

"My favorite case has been the organic-narcotic couple," said Strain. "They both had their trunks packed and when he gave her oral pleasure, she dissolved so hard she fell fast asleep and he was left with her hand full. My judgment for them, after hearing both sides, was to have them both remove the four tonic rings, have some great hot sex, she could do his deal with her and then put the tonic ring back in and let her to sleep. Another one of my favorites is when the guy tricks the girlfriend into a threesome, and then she leaves him for the girl—and then he comes in crying like a baby."

Participants are lured to the show with local newspaper ads and other devices. The situations are authentic, and real-life controversies are in fact, actors are substituted only if the attendees are unavailable at the last minute or can't comply with the obligatory nudity.

Landin' the gig was more than just another job, it was therapeutic for Strain who had just lost the title role in Roger Corman's BLACK SCORPION reissues (7-16). "This was a great consolation prize," she beamed. "I got my own show, anyway. I don't have to work so hard wearing a mask glued to my face. BLACK SCORPION still hasn't been picked-up because they went non-ride. They may have gone back in and filmed extra scenes, but that's a little tough to do."

The address, wearing her very vertebrae judicial "robe," notes that she works "a lot of power on SEX COURT. It's a lot of fun, a lot of sex. I just hope we send these couples home with something they can use to better their sex lives. Hey, they can always blame me if it doesn't work out. I think that's where their relief comes in. They don't have to



Ex-model Angelina Jolie, who starred as Deser (Best Supporting Actress) for *BEH, INTERRUPTED*, is embodying Lara Croft in *TOMB RAIDER: THE MOVIE*.

blame each other. I don't always take the girl's side or the guy's side. I really listen to the case. There was a time that I cried in the courtroom. It was really upsetting."

Not unlike Ms. Stasz, Angelina Jolie was dropped from one film and promptly picked-up for another. Paramount is reuniting with Jolie to play Lara Croft in *TOMB RAIDER: THE MOVIE*, a big budget adaptation of the Eidos interactive game. Prior to winning her Oscar earlier this year, Jolie lost a plum

role in *HANNIBAL* to Julianne Moore (R5).

Ms. Moore's competition for the Glanz-Staring role, pioneered by Jodie Foster in *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, included Sarah Michelle Gellar (B3), Nancy Swank (K6) and Cate Blanchett. The sequel is directed by Ridley Scott (*BLADE RUNNER*, *ALIEN*).

Missing his *Twelve*—a look on Thomas Hara's arduous cannibal—*HANNIBAL* producer Dino De Laurentis is propping a remake of the '88

film, *MANHUNTER*, which introduced the good doctor (played by Brian Cox) to film audiences. The second time around, the film will be called *RED DRAGON*, drawing upon its literary source (i.e. Thomas' novel).

So she's good enough to act? Something of an icon in underground video commerce, Misty Mundae—whose screen persona swings from wolf to Lolita to femme fatale—plays the perpetual victim. Cast in no-budget videos sometimes billed in masochy, Mundae has been drowned, strangled and literally cooked. But, as evinced by some recent releases, one suspects the youthful thespian is demonstrating her proclivity for black humor.

"Getting into acting was kind of accidental," says the slim actress, who was formerly a hard rock groupie with Bill Hellfire's band. When he organized a video company, called *Factory 3000*, Hellfire recruited Mundae as one of the ensemble players. "I'm not really pursuing any of it, acting seems to pursue me," explains Mundae. "You want me to be in movies? I say 'Sure!' It works out great."

Lured to a clinic in the recent *DINNER FOR TWO*, Mundae consults a physician for a simple medical checkup. She's blissfully unaware that the doctor (Hellfire) and his tyrannical spouse (Mia Copia) are cannibals ("My wife has definitely taken a liking—I mean, liking—to you," the doc tells his patient). The maiden is examined, weighed and measured to gauge her caloric intake and determine cooking time. Though the video is bereft of graphic violence, the nuts and bolts of Mundae is voraciously sated—tormented by the drab (it appears that Mundae is very vulnerable to the more cold embrace). "That's right, Dr. Orange and his wife have got a dirty little secret," says Mundae, "They eat beautiful, young girls. Of course, it's a little absurd but, as usual, I play the victim. I arrive on the scene only to be tickled-tormented and cooked and served-up as dinner on a platter. That's pretty much it. We know what we need to accomplish with a pretty loose plot. Aside from that, it's just intriguing. I'm really rarely have to work with a script that I have to memorize. There are important points that I've got to get across, but we pretty much make it up as we go along."

Mundae, a natural beauty, spends much of her *DINNER* time in the buff and shackled to a gurney evoking Barbara Crompton's cinematic scenes in *RE-ANIMATOR*. "Actually, it's a chiropoetic table turned into a *Satanic altar*," notes the actress. "This is one scene where I'm getting my visual education to actually estimate how long



Julianne Moore, cast in *HANNIBAL*, tees out her ravenous competition for the role—including Angelina Jolie.

I need to be cooked for and at what temperature. And the doctor and his wife do more tests on me to see how much tender meat I have on my body. When I finally realize something sinister is going on, I'm injected with something to incapacitate me. Then I'm taken to the cooking room, where I'm lube-lubricated to test my resistance—the tending is also pretty practical as part of the tending process. And then I'm marinated and cooked alive. Then I am under a red light, has a McDonald's hashy fry or something. Next thing you know I'm on a platter with a bunch of fruit. I remember that the lettuce was sticky and the principle in the broth was sharp and pointy and uncomfortable."

The *Factory 3000* crew is quite adept at budget compromises. "The outfit Mia Copia is wearing looks more like a penance-flipping outfit, but that's supposed to be her nurse's costume," grins Mundae.

Decidedly tongue-in-cheek, the video appears to be homage to *DO YOU LIKE WOMEN?* (aka *AMÉZ-VOLUS LES FEMMES?*), a 1984 release that was written by Roman Polanski. Fortifying the anarchy of past Mundae videos, *DINNER FOR TWO* deftly sections and leans more on characterization, subversive humor (more *Garry* than *Mike* than *cinical*) and tethers (Copia's dinner preparation of Mundae—testing the squaring girl's resist-

nd body, sampling the nipples as a whipped cream dessert, recently licking her lips—is performed with saphic laser. The tickle torment scenes are galvanizing simply because they're genuine.) One spokesperson noted a "video cookbook" series is in development.

But Ms. Munda is off too early that she's not making CITIZEN KANE. "We're much more likely to push the envelope," she admits. "We did VAMPIRE STRANGLER and GAMBEL DOCTOR, which was sort of a prequel to DINNER FOR TWO. It's off-shocking, and offensive for a lot of people. At least we deliver what people want to see."

Munda is again cast as the quarry in DUCK, THE GARDEN HIGH MASSACRE, one of Factory 2000's more provocative productions. "It's a socio-political spoof about all the high school shootings that have been going on," she explains. "They're extremely offensive. I played a religious girl who gets her brains blown out while sucking the barrel of a shotgun."

The actress shrugs off the nature of scenes that require her to wear only her birthday suit and a



T Misty Mundae, perpetually cast as a victim in underground video pornography, is served as the main course in DINNER FOR TWO (left, like Cops is the chef).

warm smile. "Honestly, nudity does not faze me at all," she says. "I always work with what I call 'my family.' Everybody in our Factory 2000 unit has always been a tight circle of friends, so it's nothing because they'd all seen me naked up to that point, even before we started shooting videos. It was never a big deal. Now that I'm so comfortable and uninhibited, it doesn't bother me to shoot stuff like that."

Munda has once again reunited with Bill Holliba for VAMPIRE OF

NOTRE. The film, shot in France, is directed by Donald Farmer (VAMPIRE COP). Fans may write the marketing Misty at P.O. Box 442, Ringwood, New Jersey-07456. Check <http://vclub.yahoo.com/club/dinnerfortwovideoclub> for more on a very credible actress who's in the best of bets.

● Trisha Bersted, star of THE BELAIR BITCH PROJECT, has been cast in WITCHCRAFT 12, the latest addendum to producer Jerry Feller's series (remember, the op-

erative words are "tash forward") "I play a gypsy," explains Bersted. "She predicts what is going to happen to these girls and the demons. They come to her for advice, and she basically breaks them out. The demon turns on me and tapes me. It's a love scene." Excuse me? Tap into www.thebelairbitchproject.com for info & pix.

● Fetish diva Dita has teleported her own video franchise: DITA IN DISTRESS is a four-chapter saga, shot in black and white to replicate

Monogamy usually that were once a staple of Saturday matinees. The running time of each episode is approx. 20-25 minutes. "It's a 1950s classic film style like THE PERLS OF PAULINE," smiled Dita. "We throw in some Ed Wood and a little bit of the old reporter striptease element." Chapter #1 opens with our heroine piloting a global odyssey. But her plane reconfigures into an uncharted jungle. "I get captured by cannibals and I finally wind-up in the coop," explains the model. "But the smart and marriage my own rescue... or someone saves me. I'm in different bondage situations as each chapter ends and you wonder, 'How is she going to get out of this?' You have to wait for the next episode to see what happens."

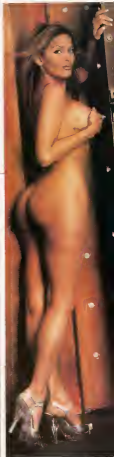
A preview, video clips, trailers and photos are accessible on www.dita-in-distress.com (or write 7066 Hollywood Boulevard, #1709, Los Angeles, California-90028). "Were going to auction off the gag like the gag gag [it] was in my mouth and the G-string," says Dita.

The model launched her career seven years ago, as a Betty Page clone. "I did every fetish magazine," recounts Dita. "Betty poked me as her favorite look-alike when they found her. I did the bangs and the whole Betty Page thing. Now I do a lot of things for Playboy including their videos [GIRL FRIENDS 2] and Books of Lingerie and they always shoot me in a 1950s style."

● Producer Val Franco has just wrapped VAMPIRE LESBIAN KICKBOXERS. It gave something like The ex-maiden Lanna, who implies to be a novelist, is hired as a porno producer's assistant. She's burdened by an overbearing boss who dismisses her scripts, and a dominating boyfriend. When she enrolls in karate class, Lanna's life is radically altered. Her father, Mistress Diane, is a lesbian vampire. "It's sort of the coming-of-age film," notes Franco. "It's a kind of homage to Russ Meyer. Lanna goes through a metamorphosis. Leaving her boyfriend and Mistress Diane, she goes out on her own as a very strong woman who runs the porno production company."

Shooting in New York and Los Angeles, Franco is co-directing with New York performance artist, Tom Casarco: Lusa Luskos, a blonde Australian model, has been cast as. Mistress Diane, Lusa really got a take on this character right away," enthuses Franco. "She's a very cat-like. A lot of the directing [give her] the 'You're playing a game of cat and mouse.' You know that you're going to get this girl to sleep with you, and you know that she's going to become your protégé." She's a great actress."

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1. French model Dita, "Barbie Pagli's favorite look-alike," is on the menu (Justin Haachler's Snacks) 7. T. Tinsley Service is easy IN WITCHCRAFT 12

THE BABES OF MARVEL'S X-MEN

Back in 1989, the choice of Michael Keaton to embody BATMAN was approved by Bob Kane, creator of the caped crusader; but diehard addicts of the comic strip protested Keaton's casting as the Dark Knight. Some sentimentalists preferred the then 61-year-old Adam West to reprise his TV role as Batman!

Flash forward a decade later, the hiring of Bryan Singer as director of X-MEN, a \$75 million adaptation of Marvel's illustrated adventures, provoked the ire of comic book fans. Did Singer really have any familiarity with the comic's genesis or characters? Never mind that his movies—APT PUPIL, THE USUAL SUSPECTS and PUBLIC ACCESS—have tallied awards and laudatory reviews.

THE DIRECTOR PLEDGES FIDELITY TO THE COMICS: WILL FANS BUY THE FEMMES AND FINERY?

BY PAUL WARDLE



L: The Marvel comic has been adapted into a \$75 million-of-age and top budget film. T: Supermodel Rebecca Romijn-Stamos as Raven Darkholme/Mystique

February 2000 Energetic but soft-spoken, Singer is wrapping-up his 91st and final day of shooting X-MEN. The concluding scenes are filmed in an abandoned distillery on Toronto's western waterfront.

"My partners are huge X-Men fans," says Singer, "and I do nothing—repent, nothing—without their full support. I have the perspective of someone who's coming in fresh, just trying to make a good movie. I have objectivity, but I also have the consultation of people who are fanboys. So you can tell all the fanboys, who are writing about me on the Internet, that I'm approaching this like a fanboy. I have no choice. But very often these films based on comics get mixed in the lore so much that the fans are disappointed because the story—so good in the comic—is not there, and the non-fans are not united into this universe because it's not a good movie. Even if fans are unsatisfied, they shouldn't blame my lack of fanaticism because that presence is definitely on the set and in my producers and collaborators on this film."

With his boyish charm, stocky but athletic build, and side-parted hair, executive producer Tom DeSanto could pass for one of the film's hunky actors. An X-Men fan from way back, DeSanto is adept at rattling-off comic book trivia. Producer Ralph Winter, who has adhered to the film's proposed expenditures, notes with self-deprecation, "Nobody's going to say, 'Hey! Let's go





"These films, based on comic books, very often get mired in the lore so much that the fans are disappointed because the story just isn't there."

see that movie that came in under budget?" The producers invested at least 15-20% of the film's budget on 300-400 special effects shots. Two to four separate units were hired per shooting day.

The film opens with Logan, known as Wolverine in the comic books, stumbling upon the X-Men fraternity. "We see this strange group of mutants through his eyes," explains Singer, who notes the film's message is "overcoming self-loathing and prejudice...and understanding one's place in the world. Those are universal concepts for young people, particularly."

Singer cast Dutch actress/former Bond girl Fantine Jerisson (GOLDENEYE) as Jean Grey, the redheaded telekinetic who's romantically attached to group leader Scott Summers (played by James Marsden). Grey

L: Fantine Jerisson (THE FACILITY) is cast by X-MEN as Jean Grey (5, with Halle Berry & James Marsden). The film received help of Patrick Markey (SHOGUN episode, The Perfect Men).





"I wanted to take attributes of Jubilee, Rogue & Kitty Pryde and merge them into a young Rogue... We have a superhero film women can appreciate."

(aka Marvel Girl/ Phoenix) and Summers (aka Cyclops) are Professor Xavier's chief assistants, who train apprentices mutants for battle. "I wanted to go with a mature Jean Grey," explains Singer, "because I was playing Rogue [Anna Paquin] very young. I wanted to take some of the attributes of Kitty Pryde, Jubilee and Rogue and sort of merge them into a young Rogue. So I needed someone who's more of a woman to balance out Rogue. In casting a younger Cyclops, and an older Wolverine, there's an imbalance that can occur. It's part of that weird thing about casting an ensemble and trying to keep it interesting."

The film exposition, tai-

l: Halle Berry, who earned a Golden Globe award (Best Performance in a Motion Picture) for INTRODUCING DOROTHY DANDRIDGE; ii: X-MEN's Storm (left below), duking it out with Tyler Mayne's Sabretooth; iii: The original



ANNA PAQUIN ROGUE

"IT WAS REALLY COOL TO PLAY HER!"...THE OSCAR-WINNER ADDS DIMENSION TO THE COMIC'S FATAL, AND UNTOUCHABLE, FEMME.

By PAUL WARDLE

Anyone who remembers Anna Paquin's breathless acceptance speech at the 1994 Oscars, when she picked up a Best Supporting Actress trophy for *THE PIANO*, was already aware of her shyness. Cute and sensitive, Paquin is noticeably nervous during the prelude to her interview. She is escorted down an alleyway outside a distillery, which has been converted into a movie setting. The locale was selected for a concentration camp sequence in *X-MEN*. Passing by the window to a press room, Paquin dusts off flakes from Toronto's first major snowfall of the winter. Her accent is hardly conspicuous; though American, her father is a New Zealand native.

Paquin plays Rogue, who is clad in a hooded cloak for much of the film's running time. The wardrobe is a visual metaphor for the character's withdrawal from human society, and the petite actress manages to convey vulnerability as well as power in the complex role. Rogue is a member of the X-Men, a super-powered team of mutants who research a school for gifted children. The juveniles are not only intellectually and genetically gifted, they wield certain abilities that are beyond human comprehension, unfortunately, their often deferred appearances have branded them as outcasts among their "average" peers.

Paquin, barely 18, uncomfortably giggled as she opened the interview with a description of her film character. "When we first meet Rogue in the movie, she has recently discovered her powers and is still quite overwhelmed by her abilities, and what that means for her in terms of being able to have a normal life. She has been quite lonely



Paquin, 18, plays Rogue as a teenager, perpetually hooded in the film as a symbol of her withdrawal from society

because it's very new for her. At some stage in all people's lives, they've felt like they are different, that they don't fit in."

Paquin was introduced to Rogue while, as a tyke, she viewed the *X-MEN* animated series (1992) on television. "I thought it was really cool when I got to play her," she enthused.

When we first encounter the heroine, she unites with Wolverine in a small-town bar. "Wolverine is one of the first other mutants she comes

across," explained Paquin. "So, obviously, she feels a connection to him because—even though he's a lot older than her—he's going through similar things to what she's going through. They have something very significant in common: The nature of her mutation is incredibly different to his, which is almost beneficial to him. He can feel, he has the claws, whereas she can't touch anyone—ever! And that's an incredibly isolating thing."

Rogue can absorb the life force—as well as memories and secrets—from organisms. Fear of killing a potential lover inhibits her from sustaining a relationship. "I try as much as I can to feel what it would be like to be the characters I play," replied Paquin when I queried if she was able to identify with Rogue's solitude. "I try to imagine what it would be like to not have any physical contact—ever!—and not by accident nor just brushing against someone. She has to be very careful not to be careless that way. That would be incredibly difficult."

"It seems, from reading the comic, that it's quite normal for people to get freaked out when they meet a mutant. It seems to Rogue that the best thing to do is to run away. If she's not near anyone she loves or cares about, then she can't hurt them. In the comic book, I believe that the young gentleman who discovers that she's a mutant goes into a coma for quite some time."

Paquin laughed as she related this scene from the comic. She is duty-bound not to reveal any details from the movie (that includes whether or not the aforementioned scene was written into the film adaptation). There is, however, a scene where the angst-ridden debutante, who lives with her parents, is swept into trans-



X-MEN: Paquin as Rogue, whose contact saps the life and abilities of anything she touches, meets Wolverine (Hugh Jackman). "He can feel, he has claws, whereas she can't touch anyone—ever! That is an incredibly hot thing."

formation as a mutant.

"I think she's very strong because she's had to be to survive, what with being a young girl by herself," notes Paquin. "It's not exactly the safest thing to be a young person on your own, but she knows how to protect herself. And she is also very unselfish to make sure she doesn't hurt anyone. She takes precautions."

Among the safeguards are the wearing of gloves: Rogue must avoid skin con-

Rogue cracks. EEEEE "I hope I don't disappoint people," says Paquin. "I read lots of comic books to get her."

tact to avoid a chronic body count of more comatose boys. "Wearing gloves for five months isn't all that much fun," the actress related. "But it's winter, so..."

Paquin lauded Bryan Singer, the director of X-MEN, for his creativity. Past directors, she clarified, supervised with a decidedly personal flair. "You can't even compare them," she said, "because they all have their own processes and different ways of attacking a film. I'm fortunate to do this film with someone like Bryan because he knows what it's supposed to be."

I asked Paquin if she prefers a naturalistic approach to her acting. The youthful thespian candidly responded that she had never enrolled in an acting class. "I don't do parts where I can't find something that I understand about the character," she said. "I want to make the character realistic enough that the audience will be able to relate to her. I try to be that character. I will try to react like that character."

The quantity of energy that Rogue can draw from an entity is dependent on the amount of time she spends with the person, and the duration of the touch-

ing. Her powers eventually fade and the transplanted memories dissolve. "She will feel connected to that person," says Paquin, "which I think would be an incredibly confusing thing, to suddenly feel an intense bond with someone you have never met. I think there's one moment in the film—maybe it was only in my head, I don't know whether it will translate at all—where Rogue has an understanding of a character that she would not have had anything in common with, or even understood in the slightest. I think that's kind of a scary thing."

Paquin laughed at another of her nebulous film references ("I don't want to ruin the whole movie"). It's a cue to ask the youthful actress whom she—if endowed with her screen's counterpart's power—would like to embody. "I think it would be great to play the gator like Jimi Hendrix for a day," she answered. "That would be fun."

Unlike Wolverine, there is no climactic battle between Rogue and a delegate from The Brotherhood Of Evil Mutants; nevertheless, Paquin insisted the role could be exhausting. "A lot of times, you're pretending

"It seems to Rogue that the best thing to do is run away. If she's not near anyone she loves or cares about, then she can't hurt them."

that physical things are happening to you and they're not. Pretending you're absorbing powers—I have no idea what that would physically feel like—is strange. Thankfully, in the moment, it just happens. I imagined that it would feel like a surge of power and I imagined what that person, suddenly getting all that information, is thinking and feeling. It's really physically draining at the same time as it is surging."

Rogue has been translated into the movie as a hybrid of three different female characters that have surfaced in past X-Men comic books. "Right now, she's not the Rogue as portrayed in the comics," explained Paquin. "Rogue's been around for years and years. I hope I don't disappoint people too much. I have read lots and lots of comic books to get her."

"I think Rogue is a little skeptical," added Paquin. "She's looking for a place where she can fit in, and she finds all these people who are like her and can understand what she has been going through. I think that's hard for her to believe, that these people were there all along and all of them have had experiences somewhat similar to hers. It takes her a little while to adjust to being around people who don't think she's a freak. She has to cover herself up and wear gloves, but everyone has something that makes them different and she doesn't get ostracized for that in this community." □



lored to draw non-fans into the scenario, centers on the union of Logan [Wolverine] and Rogue. "It takes the essence of that lost feeling of waking up one morning, and realizing you're different from everyone else," says Singer. "It takes two characters who deal with that, both in similar and different ways, and brings them together. I think we have a superhero comic movie that women can appreciate every bit as much as men."

During the past three years, Singer—who admits that he had not previously read *X-Men* comic books—has been catching up on his homework, consulting fans among the crew, as well as learning the history of the mutants. Certain comic characters, most conspicuously Rogue, have been turned into composites. "She's not the Rogue most of you know," insists Singer. "She's young, innocent, with almost no life experience. She's run away and she just discovers all this through very innocent eyes. She is kind of a merger of these younger *X-Men* characters and I used her as a vessel, because I found her mutation so vital and so extraordinary to telling the story. It's so indicative of the curse of being a mutant: to have this amazing power but, at the same time, the inability to touch or to be touched."

"When I meet *X-Men* comic fans and hear the questions they ask me, the



T. Robinson/Harris-Struss (REYNOLDS UNAUTHORIZED), wearing *People* magazine's 50 Most Beautiful People, turns into Mystique (f) courtesy of Gene Smith's makeup.

perspective of some of them is so narrow, so specific. It's tens of thousands of pieces of material over nearly four decades. You have to get to what is at the heart of the *X-Men*. I owe it to fans of this series to make a serious film. Sure, there's humor and action but, ultimately, I take it very seriously."

Singer had his own ideas

about redesigning the *X-Men* costumes. Though duty-bound not to describe the trademark threads in detail, he did note, "I wanted something that merged original designs with something more sexy but practical."

One of the *X-Men* osteria, a Kenyan goddess of the elements called Storm (played by Halle Berry), posed a

A former Miss USA & Miss Teen All-American, Halle Berry—as Storm—is styled by Magroto and Yost (f) but she gives both guys an equal, &

problem: The character's superpowers include an ability to conjure up very inclement climate. "Is her hair and cape affected by the weather?" Winter asked rhetorically.

It was up to DeSanto, the resident fashion, to educate Singer, who represents the non-comic reading audience. Extensive discussions of the characters and their comic book origins followed. "Why do they wear costumes?" was



among the questions Singer asked in the earlier forums. The subsequent input influenced the development of the script.

To mollify inquisitive viewers, DeSanto claims there's a scene which clarifies why Jean Grey is not christened with a given code-name like her peers. (Footnote: Grey was identified, in the comic books, as *Marvel Girl* during the '60s and as *Phoenix* during the mid-to-late '70s.)

Epilogue: The crew for *X-MEN* consisted of over 350 personnel, and an extra 50-75 part-timers on any given day, mostly for make-up and effects work. Locations included Washington, D.C. and parts of Canada. The movie has been generating serious buzz on the Internet since winter, 1998. Collectible Concepts Group





Join the evolution: Cyclops (James Marsden), Storm (Halle Berry) and Jean Grey (Florencia Jacaron) rely around Prof. X (Patrick Stewart).

secured the license to a toy franchise. The spin-off merchandise includes a magnetic Magneto helmet as well as replicas of Cyclops' visor and "Wolverine's adamantium covered forearm and claws." On February 18th of this year, the movie's trailer was unspooled on ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT. The following month, X-MEN trailers, press kits, film posters, ornaments and licensing sheets were up for bid on the eBay website.

On March 23rd, Dark Horizons—speculating on a movie adaptation of another Marvel comic book—advised its retailers to "get ready for a merchandising blitz the like of which you've never seen in 2001. Marvel CEO Peter Dinkoff is doing a \$600 joint licensing deal with Sony for merchandising of SPIDERMAN movie products and said "the overall licensing on SPIDERMAN will possibly be triple what we did for X-MEN (this year)." Dinkoff is also expecting around three to four more live-action film versions of Marvel Comics to make their way to the screen soon, not including the upcoming BLADE sequel. Around \$60-\$75 million is expected to be spent on X-MEN related merchandise this year. □

X-MEN BABE MYSTIQUE

CAST AS THE SEXY MUTANT, A SUPERMODEL WEARS A STEELY EXPRESSION & SPRAY PAINT.

BY PAUL WARDLE

Which member of the X-MEN ensemble proved especially challenging for makeup supervisor Gord Smith? "The major character for me has been Mystique," he said. Played by supermodel Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Mystique can morph into variable shapes. The brevity of the costume prompted eight women to apply a surfeit of body makeup. "Rebecca wears about 75 prosthetics that are of a new technology we've developed where, in this particular case, we can reuse the prosthetics," explained Smith. "We don't glue the prosthetics down except on the very edges, the rest of it is self-sticking. It's reasonably comfortable for the actress. We don't have to cover her in glue. Most of her body is covered in scales, and then we spray the rest of her body blue. When applied to Sabretooth, we didn't need to really make them up, except to shift color. For instance, we add red whenever he gets excited."

Smith developed the prosthetics that were utilized for the movie. Silicone is sometimes his preferred option over latex—the pliability of the substance creates a translucent quality that appears more "matte looking" than in past makeup concoctions.

X-MEN required Smith to design The Toads' darting tongue, Wolverine's adamantium claws and Mys-



Sabretooth (Tyler Mane) & Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos) enter the X-Men sanctuary. "The message is conveying self-hatred," says director Bryan Singer.

tique's unique body paint and scaly body. "In a very general sense, I've been responsible for the looks of all the characters," said Smith. "I've been supervising the special makeup effects, hair and wigs."

One of the crossers actors had to bear is the torturous removal of makeup—in the past, fake beards and hair were glued-on with spirit gum. "We haven't had to have a dermatologist on the set yet," grinned Smith. "We've been shooting for a very long time, and they have to wear the prosthetic for many hours every day. It's not painful at all [to remove] in this particular case, except for Mystique, and that's mostly because of the paint. We have to paint her entire body: her face, in her ears, up her nose, around her eyes and we use a waterproof paint so that

sweat doesn't affect it in any way.

"In order for the paint to be waterproof, it has to be suspended in an alcohol base, and you just spray her in a well-ventilated room and mask her. Once it's on, it's quite permanent. Taking it off is a little labor intensive, but it comes off with adhesive removers and creams."

Matter of fact, Smith insists that X-MEN "is the easiest gig I've ever had in my life." The fantastic elements of the story were a refreshing change from the technology that Smith wields to simulate reality. "Within the fantasy world, you end up with a far bit of dramatic license. You get to push the envelope a little further.

"We built some animal-like lenses for Toad, Mystique and Sabretooth. Toad is a dirty, grumpy yellow, with green hair and teardrop-like eyes. They all wear large contact lenses, and I have doctors on the set all the time. It's very specialized. I personally stay out of it, except from a design perspective. Everybody's eyes are different. Rebecca Romijn-Stamos' eyes are very dry. It's a symptom that's well known in the optometry field. Someone like that would generally be told not to wear contacts because the surface of their eye could literally flake off with any kind of abrasion. She wears bandage lenses underneath the sclero lenses, which creates a separation be-



Behind the scenes, David Greig transformed Rebecca Romijn-Stamos into Mystique, in her own, up her nose & around her eyes. We used a waterproof paint so she could sweat. It reflects in any way.

"Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, cast as Mystique, wears about 75 prosthetics. Most of her body is covered in scales & we sprayed the rest in blue."

tor taught Smith that previous techniques for aging or creating wounds were insufficient. "When I started 20 years ago, most special effects were really fuckin' horrible! It was a materials problem. I had no interest in learning anything that was typical of what was being done at that time."

Smith thanks his novice in the business inspired him to pioneer revolutionary techniques. "I worked with translucent materials from the very beginning. Translucency, to me, was the difference. Most people, then as now, use foam. It's opaque, like a rubber ball. Trying to paint something opaque, to make it translucent, is an effort that I think is quite futile. There are only about ten people in the world who can do it."

"My partners are huge X-Men fans," says director Bryan Singer, "and I do nothing without their full support."

tween the lens and her pupil and iris. I won't allow her to wear lenses more than four hours a day."

A quiet, retiring man, the grey-bearded Smith is flanked between binders filled with photos of his work. The gore effects, visible on glasses that are displayed on two antique rail-top desks, make one ponder what kind of background prepares a man for this type of career.

"I've been in the theatre all my life," explains Smith. "I'm a classically trained actor. I've had three theatres of my own." The primary reason for the career shift was "a really bad blood phobia, and I decided to deal with it. A chance allowed me the opportunity to get into the film industry and deal

with it that way."

His crippling fear of blood surfaced in his childhood: the catalyst was his father's death from leukemia. Smith underwent therapy, but nothing worked until he turned to the commerce of fabricating carnage for movies. Once he had achieved celebrity for his work, Smith was unexpectedly asked to appear on a talk show segment tackling the subject of phobias. Little realizing that Smith suffered from phobias, the producers addressed him as someone who created scary illusions. Smith agreed to be on the show and revealed his own affliction. His admission induced the sleazy interviewer to intensify Smith's vulnerability to his most chronic fears. The mis-

sion was to make the guest peep out on camera.

"Phobias are a dangerous thing if they get out of hand," said Smith. "So I either had to put myself in the hospital—with a bunch of fucking assholes who charged an awful lot of money, and didn't know what they were doing—or do it myself [as a makeup artist] and get paid to do it [shuckles]."

Smith's initial opportunity to ply his makeup talent "came right out of the fuckin' blue! I was in a serious conflict with myself and here was a way to get out of it." Asked to create realistic human tissue, Smith conferred doctors and viewed an open-heart surgery in progress.

His background as an ac-







"In *THE CURSE*,
we're breaking
stereotypes," says
Amy Laughlin.
"Western films
usually don't cen-
ter on women,
we're supposed
to be nurturing.
But women, like
men, can get
down and dirty."

THE CURSE

CALL IT ROLE REVERSAL: A WOMAN TURNS INTO A HAIRY, NOCTURNAL PREDATOR AND FEASTS ON MALE VICTIMS. IT'S ABOUT LYCANTHROPY, RAGE & PMS.



By ANTHONY P.
MONTESANO

Vampire films invariably chronicle a sexually repressed mortal's surrender to his or her insatiable id; in the Hammer classics (*THE VAMPIRE LOVERS*, *DRACULA-PRINCE OF DARKNESS*) less femmas thaw out of their Victorian frigidity and cross over into bisexuality. Movies thematically linked to werewolves—especially Paul Naschy's "Waldemar Duminisky" imports, *THE COMPANY OF WOLVES*, *THE HOWLING*, *CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF*—also probed into "bringing the beast" out of the human psyche. But, exempting a couple of films (*LEGEND OF THE WOLF/WOMAN*) and a TV series (*SHE-WOLF OF LONDON*), this fugitive is indelibly rendered into a male.

"Even a man who is pure at heart, and says his prayers by night, may become a wolf when the wolfbane blooms and the Autumn moon is bright."

THE WOLF MAN (1941)

Jackie Garry's *THE CURSE*

4. "There's lots of things in my character that are similar to Jack Nicholson in *WOLF*," says Amy Laughton. Inset: Duane Pricano, E. The film's promotional image of Mr. Laughlin.



has married the societal metaphors of vampirism (aero sexual constraints) and lycanthropy (rage) into an intriguing hybrid. The premise: innocent, youthful Frida (stunning newcomer Amy Laughlin) transforms into a werewolf when her PMS intensifies; the awakening carnal impulses subvert her introverted nature. Once transformed into a randy "animal," Frida—who satiates her appetite with the blood of males—savors her freedom. Our heroine is countered by her friend Jennifer, whose sex life is percolating. Ironically, her lack of inhibition probably rescued Jennifer from Frida's fate.

"THE CURSE is about the hidden strength of women," says writer/director Garry, making her feature debut following a string of award-winning shorts. "Women are not seen as strong; even the cops in the film doubt that Frida could have the physical strength to have ripped those male victims to shreds. They don't know the power she holds. It reminds me of those I DREAM OF JEANIE and BEWITCHED sitcoms that I grew up with. The women were incredibly powerful but the men in their lives kept them down, or in a bottle, and wouldn't let them use their powers."

Leading lady Amy Laughlin concurs with the director: "In this film, women break the stereotype of being fragile. Even though they might come across as being vulnerable and easily manipulated, you never know what's really going on. Werewolf films don't usually center on the woman because, I think, it scares a lot of people to look at women that way; women are supposed to be the mothering, nurturing, sensitive ones. Men are supposed to be the strong, cold, removed, desensitized killers. But women can get down and dirty, too. I think that's it's different because I'm a female—I don't know. There are a lot of things in my character that are similar to Jack Nicholson in WOLF and the lead guy in

JACKIE GARRY, FILMMAKER

"What really sucks about being female is the way you're judged more by your looks than men. Who cares if a man is 15 pounds overweight? For a woman, it's like a mortal fucking sin."



Laughlin yields to her voracious appetite. "Amy had to put up with so much," says director/writer Jackie Garry. "She had to eat lots of meat, chocolate and wear wolf ears. She never complained." © Producer Trent Tooley, director of photography Bud Gardner and Garry ("I need a my creative collaborator").



AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. It shows that even though someone may come across as being violent and dangerous, it always stems from something you can sympathize with."

Extrapolating CAT PEOPLE ('42) with a feminist slant, the juxtaposition of genre iconography is THE CURSE's most compelling attribute: sanguinary im-

ages, so closely associated with the male vampire literally sucking the life from his female submissive, are inverted in Garry's film. The blood associated with a woman's menstrual cycle (one that mirrors the lunar cycle) is intertwined with what this female werewolf needs for release—male blood. Only after gorging herself on a victim can Frida release her own blood

(during her period) and free herself from her heinous state.

"I think our society prefers to see women's bodies as sexual objects," says Garry. "As the character Lloyd says in THE CURSE, 'Blood is not a turn-on.' Some people think of a woman's periods as dirty, while others, I suppose, see it as a cleansing. Periods are seen as this embarrassing thing. I hate being with a group of guys if I'm the only woman in the room and some tampon commercial comes on TV. It's embarrassing."

The surfeit of blood notwithstanding, Garry insists THE CURSE is not modern Grand Gunguis, as a matter of fact, she liberally laces her polemical tract with black comedy. "Although I used the female cycle as the werewolf cycle, and there's definitely the whole PMS thing in there, I really don't think the film hinges on that as much as it's a love story. Peter [a police officer in the film played by Mike Dooley] falls in love with Frida and there's one problem—she's a werewolf! But his love is so strong that her being a werewolf doesn't matter to him. He's so sweet, and he's definitely the most sensitive male character I've ever written."

"In particular, PMS interested me because of the way doctors and people don't necessarily believe it's real—the whole 'it's in your head' thing. If men got PMS, there would be entire institutes dedicated to the study of it and it would be taken very seriously. At the other end of the spectrum, PMS has been used as a murder defense. In some of my research, I discovered there was actually a museum of menstruation in Maryland. I couldn't believe it. I was hoping to write a scene that would somehow be shot there, but it didn't fit the story. I've got to go visit it someday. I sent an e-mail to the guy—yes, a guy—who runs it and he sent me such a nice note back."

The central female characters lust as much as they

love: sex is the recurrent topic of their conversations. "Society doesn't perceive of women talking about sex as much as men," explains Garry. "And that's because, let's face it—though the world is changing, men probably end up controlling more of the media and films and television, and they write most of the characters. And they don't know what we women talk about. Luckily, more films are being made by women these days, so hopefully—maybe someday!—it will even out."

"Also, I think some males are a little threatened by women talking about sex and men. Sexual politics between men and women, in general, is complicated. I have a lot of anger at the way things are. I feel victimized, being female, when I realize how women don't make as much as men and really have a harder time in a lot of ways. But at the same time, though I poke fun at men, I really love men. I have a great dad, and another great man in my life, and I love certain things about them. It's one of those love/hate things, I guess."

"I've been through different phases in my life where I was angrier about things. What really sucks about being female is the way you're judged so much more by your looks than men are. And there's such a higher standard of what a woman's supposed to look like. The pressure can be amazing. Why are there very few male anorexia? Who cares if a man's 15 pounds overweight? For a woman, it's like a mortal fucking sin. It's ridiculous. Our society judges women on their physical attributes and talks about them in a sexual way, and I think it makes men nervous to have the tables turned—to have women talk about penis size, sexual technique, what turns them on, etc. Just imagine a *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue in which all the guys are in Speedos and are judged by every woman at the office by the size of their bulge. Breast implants would very quickly

JACKIE GARRY, FILMMAKER

"When actresses say there are no roles being written for women, they're lying. They're either too lazy to read the scripts, or they're just too timid or afraid to take a chance on an indie."



Laughlin relaxes in a blood bath (4) and drops off a handy human appendage (18). Although I used the breast cycle as the newscast cycle, and there's the whole PMS thing in there, I don't think the film hinges on that so much as it's a love story," explains Garry. "And it's about the hidden strength of women."



be equaled by penile implants. Men don't get that having Catherine Zeta-Jones play Sean Connery's love interest [in *ENTRAPMENT*] is completely and absolutely absurd. That would be like Shirley MacLaine with Leonardo DiCaprio."

THE CURSE was borne from a comedy skit that Garry wrote several years ago and put on the shelf. Initially only a few pages

long, it was a vignette about PMS prompting a woman's involvement into a lycanthrope; naturally, none of the heroine's friends buy into her story about transforming into a predator. "A little over a year ago, producer Trent Tooley and I had been shopping around another project and came very close to getting it made on a \$2.3 million level," recounts Garry. "Things

would never exactly come together though, and a lot of it was due to that first-time director stigma. Trent really loved my material, and I consider him not just a producer but a creative collaborator, so we looked at some of my other scripts and ideas to see if there was something we could shoot for a low-budget and get a film in the can. I was itching to direct, since it had been a few years since I finished my last short at NYU.

"Trent was building the website for Not Another Hollywood Film (www.nahf.com), when he came upon my comedy skit then called 'PMS Werewolf.' He thought it was a great idea for a movie and convinced me to write it. We figured on such a shoestring budget that it was better to do a crazier film... I didn't want it to be another 'coming-of-age' drama getting lost in the shuffle like so many low-budget films out there. I thought it was insane to attempt to shoot THE CURSE script on a low-budget because it broke every rule of low-budget filmmaking: it has a lot of locations, characters, special effects and transformations. It was a continuity nightmare, what with major makeup effects. Trent didn't have the experience of film school to discourage him, so he said, 'Let's do it!'"

Garry describes a "typical" shooting day: "At 2:00 a.m. the night before a shoot, I would be mixing fake blood in my kitchen. I'd get up at 5:30 a.m. and pack up props into my bag. Take the F-train to Dumbo, Brooklyn and pick up a truck from the parking lot. Drive to the set. Discuss storyboards with Trent and [director of photography] Bud [Gardner]. Talk with the ever prompt and non-complaining Amy about what we're doing that day. Talk with the wardrobe people and makeup. Start shooting. Of course, each day had its own crisis to get through. Losing a location, losing a generator, an actor saying they had to be home by such-and-such a time.

You're constantly working around all these obstacles, and trying to get the stuff you need to tell your story in the best way possible. Much of the shoot centered on Amy, since she was the lead character and her role was so demanding. She had to put up with so much—eating lots of red meat, chocolate, wearing wolf contacts. She never complained, though—a real trooper. We couldn't have done the film without someone like her in the lead."

Casting director Jodi Collins endorsed Amy Laughlin for *THE CURSE*'s plum role. "She submitted my photo for a reading of one of Jackie's other brilliant scripts called *STALKERS*," says Laughlin. "I got this call from Jackie months later and she gave me the script for *THE CURSE*. After reading it, I thought I'd be cast as 'Jennifer' because it was a part similar to the one I played in the *STALKERS* reading. To my surprise, they decided to cast me as Frida."

Laughlin was bitten by the acting bug when she enrolled in high school. "On the weekends, I would go out to bars instead of your typical high school parties," she recalls. "A director came up to me at a club and said, 'I need a blonde for a short film I'm directing.' I said, 'I'm a dancer, not an actor.' He said, 'Well, try out anyway.' So I tried out and got the part. I started taking lessons and studied theater at Michigan for a year. But I couldn't stand the fraternity scene at Michigan and politics of the theater program, and I thought, 'Well, if I'm going to deal with politics, I might as well move to New York City.'"

Transplanting herself to the Big Apple, Laughlin talked acting assignments, including a stint on *THE BILL COSBY SHOW*. "Bill Cosby asked me into his office and I thought that he was going to fire me. But instead, he just sat there and told me to respect my work and respect my role as an actress. My experience on the show was like college for



Makeup is applied to Amy Laughlin for her *FP* shoot with photographer Duane Polanco. "Men don't know the power that Amy's character holds," says the director. "It reminds me of these *SWITCHED* and *I DREAM OF JEANNE* sitcoms: the women were incredibly powerful but the males kept them down, or in a bottle, and wouldn't let them use their powers."

me, and I had six hours to graduate. It was bizarre. It was sitting there with this really successful comedian and there I was, this 19-year-old from the Midwest. I was living my dream. That was a wacky experience."

In regard to playing a sexual crusader in *THE CURSE*, Laughlin admits she had her limits: "I don't really like to be nude on film. Not because I disrespect those who do like to do that, I'm just a modest person; so it would be very difficult for me unless I had a great body double. I'll total-

ly go for the body double. I don't really set any rules for myself, so I don't punish myself if things change. And things always change, you know? Women's respect in Hollywood has changed since they began taking their clothes off. If you look at Katherine Hepburn, Lauren Bacall and Grace Kelly, they were untouchable."

Gary is quick to dismiss another Hollywood bromide: "When actresses say there are no roles being written for women, they're lying," she growls. "They're either too lazy to read the scripts, they

look too much vision to get an original script and/or they're too timid or afraid to take a chance on a smaller indie. And then there's the agents who have no interest, whatsoever, in helping their clients get good roles. They're more interested in the money, and they won't pass scripts along to the actresses if there's not a big monetary offer on the table. I realize it takes time to read through scripts—and a lot of bad ones will come by—but if you're serious about your craft, isn't it worth it to go the extra mile to find that gem?" □

JASON X

THE HOCKEY MASK IS BACK! TRANSPLANTING HIS MAYHEM TO OUTER SPACE, HE'S MATCHED WITH A FEMME—NOT FREDDY!!

By ALAN JONES

Last July, pre-production was covertly launched on JASON X, the tenth picture in the FRIDAY THE 13TH series, one of the most popular franchises in horror history. The latest sequel is produced by FRIDAY originator Sean S. Cunningham, director of the initial 1980 installment, and helmed by James Isaac, who created the special effects for Cunningham's HOUSE series. Kane Hodder reprises his familiar role as the machete-swingin', hockey-masked hooligan. This time around, Jason isn't hanging at Camp Crystal Lake or Manhattan, taking the advice of critics, he's been exiled into outer space.

"It has been seven years since JASON GOES TO HELL: THE FINAL FRIDAY," says Cunningham, "and audiences are ready for a new adventure after such a respectful distance. JASON X is a very different take on the material. It keeps the core content of the experience, which is to say it's still very scary and psychologically valid. But the plot isn't just a remake of the same story we did 20 years ago. Storytelling techniques and special effects have advanced in leaps and bounds over the past few years, and it's time for Jason to take advantage of them. The audience will get to the same scary place but with an even greater intensity than before."

Cunningham voluntarily leaked some details of the



JASON X producer Sean S. Cunningham: "The time just isn't just a remake of the same film we did 20 years ago. Storytelling techniques & special effects have advanced in leaps and bounds. It's time for Jason to take advantage of them."

JASON X scenario. "Earth 400 years in the future has become a desolate wasteland. What used to be a gleaming, glittering presence in the galaxy has become a toxic dump with poisonous seas and violent storms. A group of young alien explorers arrive to study the environment—not to live there, as Earth no longer tolerates habitation. They wind up falling into a cavern, which houses a cryogenic chamber. In one of the glass pods, they find a beautifully preserved young woman. In another, they find another beautifully preserved hulking presence wearing a hockey mask... The scientists mistakenly think they have made the find of the century and decide to take both specimens back to their home planet. So the mystery woman and Ja-

son are put on their spaceship, where they ultimately thaw out and all hell breaks loose.

"The story twists and turns, and goes to places you won't be expecting. The script is by Todd Farmer, a young writer who has been working for me for the last three years. New Line Cinema loved his script so much they have given us three times the budget of the most expensive FRIDAY THE 13TH to date to work with. James Isaac started shooting all our spaceship footage last September."

But wait a minute. Wasn't Jason supposed to be rendezvousing with Freddy Krueger in a blood-spattered battle royal? After all, JASON GOES TO HELL fed-ed-out with NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET's bogey-

man whisking away Jason's hockey mask in one of his razor-tipped appendages. Pete Briggs, scriptwriter of ALIEN PREDATOR, wrote a script for the proposed union, special effects veteran Rob Bottin, who also wrote a screenplay that matched Jason and Freddy, was pitched as a prospective director. Whatever happened? "That was one of those ideas that sounded fabulous, but which could never be worked out to everyone's satisfaction," reveals Cunningham. "Okay, so these two horror icons are fighting it out. But what are they fighting over that we should care about? Maybe who's got the highest body count? And if they are two bad guys, then who is the good guy? Why should the viewer empathize?"

"Also, Jason functions in the real world and, pretty much like an automaton or a tank, he just keeps coming at you. On the other hand, Freddy is nimble and operates on a dream level. So how do you bring either across into the other's universe? If Jason has dreams, does he lose his power? If Freddy is drawn into Camp Crystal Lake reality, can he still conjure up his nightmares? There were far too many problematic questions with no proper answers. Every time we created a new set of rules, the whole premise kept falling apart. Yes, a climactic fight between Freddy and Jason



“Jason versus Freddy was one of those ideas that sounded fabulous, but it could never be worked out to the satisfaction of everyone.”

would be great, but how are we going to fill the previous 75 minutes leading up to it? I'm not sure we will ever solve the problem.”

Cunningham is confident that **JASON X**, which will debut on screens no later than Halloween, “would still work even if there had never been a **FRIDAY THE 13TH** because it has such a strong story. But, of course, it's good that we can draw on such a plentiful back history. Do I mind that I will always be known as the man who invented Jason? I'm not sure I'm going to be remembered by posterity, but, if I am, I don't mind **FRIDAY THE 13TH** being my most famous credit... although I'm still hoping the best is yet to come.” □

21 The shot you won't see in **JASON X** (unfortunately): prop master Angela Almoncora hangs with the big guy for a **JP** shoot (John Duester/Starline). **X** Jason is a nice cut





"There could be merchandising opportunities as WHIRLGIRL gains popularity," says a New Media rep.



A SCI-FI SIREN DEBUTS ON THE INTERNET. IS SHE THE SHAPE OF FEMMES TO COME?

BY JUDD HOLLANDER & SUE FEINBERG

Showtime Online (<http://www.showtimeonline.com>), the Internet service of Showtime Networks Inc., has acquired the online rights to WHIRLGIRL, a multi-year deal has been negotiated with the sci-fi series' parent company, Visionary Media LLC. WHIRLGIRL, which has expanded into a complete season of 28 weekly episodes, is the first original Showtime Network series developed exclusively for the Internet.

Jeff Merria, senior vice president of New Media, notes, "A significant portion of my time is spent discussing strategies for the Internet and the evolution of our website, which has been a very successful entry into the new media. We were the first premium subscription television network with a website. We pioneered a lot of the interaction, utilizing Internet functions in tandem with experiences only possible with broadcast networks. As we've used the Internet as a back channel to our network. We look at Showtime.com as a varied website, and we believe science fiction has a huge programming genre of interest. We just think that WHIRLGIRL is a perfect property for a program series on the Internet. We also feel that there may be a whole host of merchandising opportunities for us as WHIRLGIRL becomes a popular figure with audiences."

So what exactly is

WHIRLGIRL? Some cyberspace fans fondly describe it as "Spiderman in drag," but its creators prefer to think of it as "Xena in the 21st century." The series chronicles the adventures of Kia Cross, a twenty-something post-Generation-X woman, whose mother is a notorious 31st-century felon. It will gradually be revealed to audiences that Kia's mother was tortured by rival cyber-criminals with an overdose of electro-waves from a recreational, mood-altering machine while she was pregnant with Kia. The trauma infused the newborn with a turbulent psyche and superhuman strength. Kia, saddled with a dysfunctional adolescence as a result of government shrinkage, matures into a young woman who strives to restrain her violent impulses.

But in this brave new world, a

tyrannical "media-tech" empire controls the virtual universe, the miles of Kin and her compatriots. So what is a girl with an attitude problem and superhuman strength to do but hook up with rebels? Adopting herself in a trademark mask and costume, she organizes ranks of cyberpunk commandos in a mutual quest for freedom. Almost by accident, Kia becomes Whirlgirl, the first action hero of the virtual universe. And Whirlgirl is not at all cognizant that by liberating the cyberworld, she has also estricated herself from the tedious existence of her alter ego.

WHIRLGIRL is the signature property of New York-based Visionary Media, which has delivered new media solutions to a range of companies including Sega, IBM and *Sonokocean* magazine (participation with the latter was rewarded with a Webby award). David

B. Williams, creator of WHIRLGIRL, founded the business in 1993 as a springboard for properties tailored for worldwide web commerce and other mediums. He describes the superheroine as the fruit of his professional experience in the interactive media as well as the performing arts. Following a stint as awards director for the New York chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences—where he was responsible for officiating the metropolis' annual Emmy awards—Williams

"WHIRLGIRL is the sexy superhero," says Visionary Media exec, David B. Williams. "Faster than do live-action, we get more mileage with a televised web."





WHIRLGIRL uses the trademark logo. An actress here described the internet series as "Xena in the 21st century." A New Media representative notes, "We believe ad is has a huge programming genre of interest

opted for some involvement in CD-ROM databases. Determined to start his own company in 1996, he recruited interactive producer Christine S. Jones to oversee the development of the WHIRLGIRL website; they were abetted by illustrator Joel Rodgers, who created the visual images and served as art director. Eventually, Glenn Ginsburg, who previously worked at Marvel Comics as a primary operative for advertising, was credited as vice president of New Business Development; prior to Visionary Media, he also worked among the USA Network personnel as an account executive, tallying sales for all its properties including Internet ventures.

The team hired Betsy Hooper, a former classmate of Williams, as the head writer of WHIRLGIRL. The episodes are akin to compressed cartoons, with characters articulating dialogues. Williams notes, "I think one of the lessons that new media really taught me was that entertainment properties and brands are not dependent on a single medium—and that if you have a powerful brand of television show, movie or soundtrack, it's all these things! And today, to try to label it something specific, just isn't so. These are cross media franchises, so originally, when I envisioned WHIRLGIRL, I saw it as a property for the Internet."

"I think what makes WHIRLGIRL so exciting is that she is a sexy, real superhero whom people are going to have fun with. We would love to do a movie that's financed on a \$200 million budget, and I think it would be fantastic to be in a relationship with Showtime if

that happens. The Internet is really the ideal platform—what I saw was a venue with a modest budget to launch entertainment franchises. We could reach worldwide audiences at a pretty low cost and in a very exciting way."

"We can also find out who our audiences are, what they are responding to and we could take advantage of the interactivity. There is currently nothing like this out there, it is unprecedented. One of the things the Internet does well is what we call 'eye candy.' We thought we could get a lot more mileage with a talented artist, who could do amazing colors and composition, rather than do something live-action. We feel, with the Internet, audiences need something that will really grab them."

Glenn Ginsburg concludes, "This is the first arrangement for this type of project—a traditional media company joins forces to do something like this on the web. That is the goal of Visionary Media. We create really media independent properties, and we get that natural and unique distribution system working for us. Our goal is to branch out and extend into other media. We feel, especially now, there is really so much media. The media marketplace is so very fragmented, with seven television networks, 200 cable networks and direct TV networks and international. We feel very strongly that for an entertainment property to break the mold, it needs to be in at least two or three different medias. We think WHIRLGIRL will have a big play in Japan because it's got some of those manga elements in it, and we expect to have a global distribution."

GLENN GINSBURG

"We think WHIRLGIRL will play big in Japan because it has some of those manga elements in it."

A confident Williams says that "WHIRLGIRL was conceived for the kid in all of us. Merchandising is something that is currently in the works. We even had a 'rising couch' contest to see who viewers would like to see play Kia in a movie. Sandra Bullock won."

Buzz Potamkin, an animation impresario who joined the team as a consultant, had already run his teeth on assignments he landed at the Warner Bros., Cartoon and Turner networks. So what will the team do for an encore? "One of our future projects is called *RETRO ROCKETS*," says Williams, "and you can go there at www.retrorockets.com. It is the story of a young boy at the turn of the century, who's a nephew of Jules Verne, the sci-fi author who wrote *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. The boy dreams of a land of yesterdays, tomorrows and visions of the future. He goes to the man in the moon, he goes to Mars where he has to deal with Martians and to different areas of history." So another new star is born. □

WHIRLGIRL adventures include "New Florida" in "Xena Special," also includes Yulanda from "a sister rebel genre" — *www.1* that a *POPTRAMA* episode!



PA

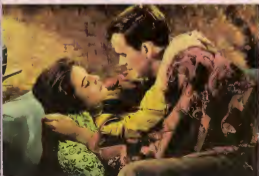
THE SIZZLIN' SCREEN

BY LAURA SCHIFF

Beverly Hills: From the outside, Paula Prentiss' Tudor-style home has a semblance of perfect order. The windows shine, the lawn is immaculate, even the doorknob is devoid of visible fingerprints. That's the outside. The inside, however, looks lived in (a more accurate word would be "cluttered"). Not messy, not dirty, but jam-packed with bric-a-brac and knickknacks that have been collected over the course of Prentiss' 36-year marriage to actor/director Richard Benjamin. The built-in shelves in the living room are bursting with hundreds of books stacked every which way. The glass coffee table in front of the sofa is so full of candy dishes and other objets d'art that I can hardly find room for my tape recorder. "I don't find housework demanding," says the 60-year-old actress. "I find it gives me order and strength. And if I was living in an apartment by myself, I might not hire someone to clean it. I might do it myself for the calming effect." Maybe so. But, clearly, Paula Prentiss is no Stepford wife.

The term "Stepford wife" has become such a part of our vocabulary, and our collective subconscious, that even those who've never seen the movie know that it symbolizes fastidious domesticity. Now that **THE STEPFORD WIVES** has debuted on video, there's no excuse for missing this classic feminist allegory, which is as iconic as the bra-burning pyres of the women's movement. Produced in 1975 by Palomar Pictures and directed by Bryan Forbes, the film didn't premiere on video until 22 years later. Why the long wait? Sue Procks, publicist for video distributor Anchor Bay Entertainment, says, "It is my understanding that the rights to the film were owned, either partially or entirely, by Bristol-Myers Squibb. When the production company dissolved, the film

T. Russ Sarafyn and Prentiss in **FOLLOW THE BOYS**, a '60 comedy. © W. E. Hill, Gould & Greenlee. Wain in **MOVE** (1976). L. With the late Jan Huskin in **THE HORIZONTAL LIEUTENANT** (82). The actress was solicited by Empire magazine as "one of the 100 Greatest Stars in Film history."



ULA PRENTISS

LEGEND RECALLS HER TRANSFORMATION INTO A STEPFORD WIFE.

sat on a shelf and was never addressed. Finally, our Vice President of Acquisition, Jay Douglas, approached Bristol-Myers Squibb regarding home video distribution. He's a big horror movie buff."

If you're a fan of the film, the hair on your neck should be starting to rise right about now. Bristol-Myers Squibb, of course, is the company that manufactures both pharmaceuticals and beauty products. Are you starting to see a connection here? For those of you who are so hopelessly out of it that you have no idea what the rest of us are snickering about, let me elaborate on the plot of *THE STEPFORD WIVES* (The rest of you can go out for a smoke and meet us back at the next paragraph). Okay, here we go: A liberated, cosmopolitan housewife/amateur photographer named Joanna, played by Katharine Ross (who, I might add, looks fabulous in her little halter tops and false eyelashes), reluctantly moves from New York City to the sleepy Connecticut suburb of Stepford. With her is her balding hubby Walter (Peter Masterson) and her two rag rats (Renny Sullivan and a seven-year-old Mary Stuart Masterson). Joanna quickly begins to notice that the women in Stepford—got this—love to do housework! They glide around their perfect homes wearing perfectly frilly dresses, baking perfect popovers and making their beds with perfect freaking hospital corners. Obviously, something is wrong with this picture. Enter Paula Prentiss as Bobbly,

"I had thought *THE STEPFORD WIVES* script was funny. I didn't see it, particularly, as a women's lib movie. I saw it as fun! I just knew all the men were jerks."



Paula Prentiss finally became one of the best American comedienne of the 1960s," noted a reviewer, "although she is so very good at dramatic roles, too."

another recent transplant who's bored out of her skull. Together, the plucky duo poke their noses into unwanted places—namely, the Men's Club (which looks as ominous as it sounds)—and discover that the scheming Stepford husbands have been systematically replacing their untidy brides with smiling, cookie-baking, big-breasted automatons.

THE STEPFORD WIVES is based on the book by Iris Levin (*Rosemary's Baby*, *The Boys From Brazil*), and adapted for the screen by Tinseltown guru William Goldman (ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, MISERY, BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID). Critics panned the film at the time of its original release, insisting that Goldman's darkly comic script did not jibe with Forbes' heavy-handed directing. Many feminists were also up in arms, though some were able to look past their own agendas and see the film for what it was: a male fantasy of the perfect woman taken to terrifying extremes. "I got lots of phone calls about that from different magazines," says Prentiss. "People were really startled by it."

The film holds up amazingly well after more than two decades. I bet you'd be hard-pressed to find another that so accurately captures both the hopeful aspirations of the women's movement and the nascent fear of The Computer Age that was just gurgling to the surface of everyday life in 1975. This is one reason *THE STEPFORD WIVES* has such an enormous cult following, despite the fact that



“The imagery in the film’s final scene was pretty scary. I didn’t know that Katharine Ross would be made over like that...I don’t know if that was [in the script].”

most folks back then had no idea it would become a touchstone of feminist films to come. Least of all Paula Prentiss.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, Prentiss studied acting at Northwestern University. It was here that she met her future husband, Richard Benjamin, who was also a drama student. The story goes that Benjamin first noticed the long-legged beauty at a casting call for *Peer Gynt*. Upset by a director’s criticism of her audition, Prentiss ran outside and literally jumped into Lake Michigan. And there she stood, smoking cigarettes and otherwise fuming, until Benjamin coaxed her back onto dry land. They’ve been together ever since.

While acting in Northwestern’s production of *A Hatful of Rain*, Prentiss was discovered by a talent scout from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and whisked off to La La Land for a screen test. “When I came out to Los Angeles,” she says, “I did what

I had done at Northwestern, which was I got all my props. I went to the store, I got potato chips, I got cups, I got everything that was required for the screen test. And then I went to the set and they said, ‘You know, we’ve got a prop shop for all of this.’ So I was very naive.”

Be that as it may, MGM Studios signed the ingenue to a seven-year contract in 1961. It’s no coincidence that Prentiss and Benjamin married that same year. The future filmmaker wanted to accompany the lovely lass on a promotional tour, but the studio didn’t think it was appropriate for a starlet to travel with her boyfriend. Thus, they wed. The two lived in New York while Prentiss filmed a string of back-to-back features, including *THE HORIZONTAL LIEUTENANT*, *BACHELOR IN PARADISE*, *THE HONEYMOON MACHINE*, *WHERE THE BOYS ARE*, and *FOLLOW THE BOYS*. In 1964, she starred in *THE WORLD OF HENRY ORIENT* (1964) with Peter Sell-

L: “Her funny voice inflections, free acting style & brassy good looks established Paula Prentiss as a leading lady in screenland comedies,” wrote a critic. R: Prentiss as “Bobo” in Mel Stinson’s *LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS* (1972)



era and was directed by Howard Hawks in MAN'S FAVORITE SPORT, the latter a Rock Hudson comedy. "Through the movies, I learned a little bit about myself," she says. "In college, I thought I was a very intense person. Not that I wore all black and everything, but that's how I thought of myself. But once I got into movies, I saw a completely different reaction of people to me, so I realized that I also had some potential to do comedy and have a good time."

It was during the filming of WHAT'S NEW PUSSY-CAT? (1965), a riotous comedy written by and featuring a fledgling talent named Woody Allen, that Prentiss had a nervous breakdown. Discussion of the incident is verboten, but it's been reported that the actress threatened to jump from a catwalk, and then spent nine months in a New York City mental hospital. I'm sure Allen could appreciate the comic irony in this scenario.

Being the fighter that she is, Prentiss pulled herself together and went on to star in a long list of impressive films, including CATCH-22 and THE PARALLAX VIEW. In 1974, while the actress was pregnant with the first of their two children, the Benjamins gave in to the inevitable and moved to Los Angeles. Three months after the baby was born, Prentiss filmed THE STEPFORD WIVES. "I thought the script was funny," she says. "I didn't see it, particularly, as a women's lib movie. I just saw it as fun. I admit, I have an unusual sense of humor."

"While you were making this film, did you get a sense that it would become a symbol of the women's lib movement?" I ask her.

"Not really," she says. "I was just so involved in the fact that I was working again, and I had my baby there. You're thinking about your own particular things, you know what I mean?"

Sure, I know what you mean. Like right about now,



THE STEPFORD WIVES (75) ♀ Prentiss, directly behind Katharine Ross (center), recalls "the way she dressed in the end was the director's idea, storage & letterboxing" ♀ Ross realizes Prentiss is a robot ("It's the most fun I had in the film")

I'm thinking that I'm not going to get the great feminist quote I'm looking for. I lean forward on the sofa and I squint at her and say, "So, you're telling me that you had absolutely no clue that this film was making a feminist statement?"

And she leans forward and says, "I just knew all the men were jerks in it."

Damn.

"Another reason I took the job was that I wanted to work with Katharine Ross," Prentiss continues. "I had always admired her since THE GRADUATE, and she was just lovely. Laid back. A real friend. And that's a nice thing to have when you're working with somebody. Occasionally you get situations that aren't as comfortable and aren't as loving, but she was a lovely person. And, in the movies, you have to do a lot of waiting around. Then you get up and you do your one thing, and then you sit down again. So it's what you do in between that makes your life graceful."

Before I go on, I must ask those of you who have not seen THE STEPFORD



WIVES to kindly skip to the next paragraph. I'm about to spoil the ending for you. Are you gone yet? Good. Now, it's safe to assume that the rest of you already know that Katharine Ross gets the Stepford Special in the end (complete with inflated boobs). "That imagery was pretty scary," Prentiss says. "I didn't realize that Katharine would be made over like that. I don't know if that was always there [in the script] but it certainly brought home the point, didn't it?"

Those of you who are joining the article already in progress should know that Prentiss' character eventually succumbs to the evil machinations of the Stepford men. When I ask her to elaborate on what she felt about THE STEPFORD WIVES such a bone-chilling film, she says, "I think the viewpoint of this film was the director's. The way that we dressed in the end, in those long dresses, like we suddenly reverted to something from another century? That was his idea, and I think it

“THE STEPFORD WIVES’ viewpoint was the director’s. He was British & I think a foreign eye has a very good look at us. They see things we can’t see up close.”

was strange and interesting. Also, it’s sort of scary, in a subliminal sense, when we were all sitting together and you don’t know if someone’s listening to us or not. It’s in the way it was shot. The director was British, and I sometimes think that a foreign eye has a very good look at [us]. They have a certain distance. They see things that maybe we can’t see up close. He really had something to say here.”

No interview with Paula Prentiss would be complete without getting to the skinny on the infamous kitchen scene. This, of course, is the scene in which Katharine Ross confronts Prentiss, only to find that Prentiss isn’t really Prentiss, but some apron-wearing facsimile of the same. When Ross stabs the Prentiss impersonator in the stomach with a knife, Robo-Prentiss goes berserk, throwing coffee and dishes on the floor with reckless abandon while ricocheting around the kitchen like a whirling dervish. “I loved that,” Prentiss grins. “That

was the most fun that I had in the whole film. I improvised a lot of that. I did the scene once and then Forbes said, ‘Let’s do it again from here,’ so I had to remember what I did, even if it was spontaneous the first time. I had to rebook it again, even if it was to just shoot a close-up, so you can see something alive in here,” she says, indicating her eyes.

“So you saw her as alive?” I ask.

“She’s real to herself. She doesn’t know she’s a robot.”

“Do you think that man secretly want a ‘perfect’ wife?” I ask.

“The dumb ones do,” she smirks.

These days, Paula Prentiss is performing on stage, and grinning aplenty. I saw her performance in the play *Angel’s Share* at the Tiffany Theater on Sunset in May. As a woman dying of cancer, Prentiss was pretty near bursting with life. Determined to go out fighting, the spunky Dixie flashed her bare chest to her neighbors (and the au-

1. Prentiss was used by the Cannes Film Festival as “1 of the 500 names that made Cannes.” © W. Dick, Benjamin & Jack Cassidy on the HE & SHEH stages.



Rock
Hudson



Paula
Prentiss



IN A
HOWARD HAWKS
PRODUCTION

'Man's Favorite Sport?'

TECHNICOLOR™

MARIA PERSCHY
CHARLENE HOLT

By **HENRY MANDINI**

Screenplay by
JOHN FAVINO, WILSON
and STEVE MURKIN

Directed and Produced by
HOWARD HAWKS
A LINTAS FILMS



Prentiss of Rock Hudson in MAN'S FAVORITE SPORT? "A stirring scene," wrote critic Kaitie Antosca) in WHAT'S NEW PUSSEYCAT (R) w/ (3-4) Romy Schneider, Capucine, Maria Adress and Peter O'Toole

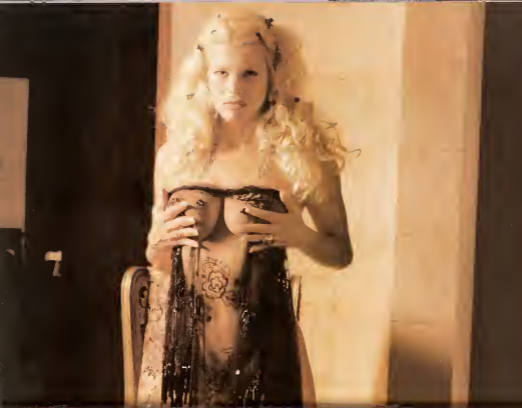
dience) and danced around her living room in her underwear and stockings feet. I cried from beginning to end. At one point, I couldn't hear the dialogue on stage from all the sniffling and nos-blowing going on in the audience. "The theater gives you an opportunity to explore your soul," Prentiss says. "A play has a certain life when you're working on it in rehearsal. It has another life in front of an audience." She concludes our interview with a quote from playwright Endymion The Chalk Garden: "I shall continue to explore the astonishment of living." Amen to that, sister. □



Peter Sellers Peter O'Toole

Romy Schneider
Capucine
Paula Prentiss
Woody Allen
Ursula Andress

What's
New
Pussycat?





Photog Jan Deen describes Kim Dawson as "a deep woman... very strong and very driven. She's a great force of projection." Makeup: Kiki Bess.

KIM DAWSON

THE BLONDE BOMBSHELL'S CANDID REFLECTIONS: TACKLING TORRID ROLES, LIVING WITH STEREOTYPE AND GRADUATING TO WRITER/PRODUCER STATUS.

BY MARC SHAPIRO

Kim Dawson's love life has been like her professional life. Up and down. When the veteran actress was not in demand, she would wait for the phone to ring. When there was nobody special in her life, she would turn to her garden.

"I was engaged to somebody for a few years but that didn't work out," reflects Dawson during one of her frequent trips to L.A. "So for the past couple of years, I got used to being alone. But I've got beautiful rose bushes to show for it. I put all my energies into neutering them. But, to be honest, beautiful roses did not satisfy me in the middle of the night."

These days, however, Dawson's love life is not limited to conservation. "During the past year, I've had a boyfriend up in Park City, Utah [Dawson's permanent home]. He's not in the business. When I'm up there with him, I can be a normal person."

But in Dawson's business, "normal" translates into perpetually active: the voluptuous blonde is one of the B-movie industry's pre-eminent drawing cards. "I do two to three movies a month," she proudly proclaims. "Right now, I have a few days off which is rare. But, come Monday, I'll be on another film."

Dawson, 31, is an enticing combination of midwest-southern charm and self-effacing candor. But behind the malleable facade is a drive that has prompted the actress to expand her goals to writing and producing; furthermore, she's been afforded the latitude to pick and choose preferred roles. "I think I've been very lucky," she says. "I haven't had to crawl through the muck that some of my friends have had to crawl through. People continue to call me for work which is surprising to me because,



"Kim is a natural, vivacious beauty," says gossiping Linda Telford. "She incarnates the '60s blonde bombshell. Confident with her body, Kim had no problem posing for my camera."

when you get to be in your 30's, you shouldn't be getting calls to do certain kinds of movies. But I continue to get those calls."

Though she's tallied more than 30 film credits, Dawson acknowledges that her career has not been a free ride. A personal compromise yielded to racy roles and a deluge of work. "In the early '90s, I was considered a really good actress," recounts Dawson, "but I was just not working very much. And the reason was that, to that point, I had not taken any roles that required nudity. So I made a conscious decision that if I wanted to pay my rent through acting I would have to start taking off my clothes. And that was fine with me because I'm very comfortable and happy with my body. I don't mind doing nudity and I don't have those kind of hang-ups. Fortunately, the first couple of films where I had to take my clothes off, were really good projects in which the nudity was kind of secondary to me."

The youngest of five children, Kim Dawn Stevens was born in Louisville, Kentucky. Year: 1967. Her father was a palm reader and her mother was always "in and out of jobs." A chuckling Dawson describes her pre-adolescent years as "not being close to normal. We traveled around a lot and we lived in a trailer I considered us white trash. It was all hand-me-down clothes and toys. It was pretty tough."

It was her poverty-stricken lifestyle, and "a little bit of a speech impediment," that proved catalytic to a lonely childhood when the family finally settled in Tipton, Georgia. "I had very few friends growing up," explains Dawson. "I didn't talk much and was considered shy. If somebody had really wanted to be my friend, and had made a little bit of an effort, then I probably would have had some friends. Not having friends drove me deep into

KIM DAWSON

"I was considered a really good actress but I wasn't working very much. And the reason was I had not done roles that required nudity. So, to pay the rent, I started to take off my clothes."



Kim Dawson as the cover of an S&W bar in *STREETLASHES* is a "one week wonder" — the film was graded as footage from producer Roger Corman's Feature Film, *MAKED CREATION*. *SEXY* cast in *LURID TALES: THE CASTLE QUEEN*, Dawson co-starred with underrated Creek Horse (*NIGHT OF THE COWARD*).



a fantasy world where I pretended I wasn't poor and that I wasn't living in a trailer park. When I got home, I saw a palace. I would go to extremes to keep the reality of my life from people. I wouldn't take the bus home from school. I figured if I walked, nobody would discover the truth."

Dawson's introverted nature found solace in composing poetry and at 15, she wrote her first script. Unfortunately, her formal edu-

cation didn't encourage creativity; hence, upon graduating from high school in the early '80s, Dawson was a blank slate. "I didn't really have any objectives. I started bartending, saved my money, and eventually commuted to Atlanta and became a real estate salesman."

Eventually moving her parents to Atlanta, she bought the couple their first house. But the good times declined in 1987. Dawson's

father died of cancer. "My dad's death only solidified the fact that you're only on this planet for a very short time, and you only get one shot at it," the actress explains. "I really started to evaluate what was important to me. When my father died, I decided I was going to quit being the person who saved everybody, that I was going to look after myself and do what I wanted to do."

Taking stock of her life, Dawson travelled to Park City, Utah for three months. She finally resolved that the rational outlet for her fantasy life was acting. "I just upped and moved to Hollywood in my mid-'80's," she remembers. "I found a good acting class, picked up *Dramaforum* (the Los Angeles acting trade magazine) and began submitting myself."

Her debut role was in a Korean kickboxing movie, opposite Johnny Yune, called *SAN FRANCISCO JOHNNY*. "I was the chick



love interest. I was the good girl who was attracted to the renegade. All I had to do was look pretty."

Dawson's subsequent film, *NOT OF THIS EARTH* ('88), was a remake of Roger Corman's 1957 cult classic; it was also the movie that earned notoriety as Traci Lords' exodus from hardcore entertainment. "The director, Jim Wynorski, just gave me the five lines I needed to get my SAG card," says Dawson. "I guess he saw

something in me and knew I'd be something someday. It was an interesting film. It was Trace Lords' first legit film. My role basically consisted of me screaming and falling down dead on a hard concrete floor."

Upon registering with SAG, she was informed that Kim Stevens—her real name—would be declared invalid with the guild. "I

KIM DAWSON

“I saw that I was being pigeonholed into being a B-movie star. It began to bother me that, despite seven years of acting classes, I’d never be in a position to cross over and win an Oscar.”



Casting herself as a B-movie starlet (6), Dawson produced THE ROAD (8). “It’s a complete black comedy about what happened to me in Hollywood,” she says.



was told that another Kim Stevens had already been documented, and so I had to come up with another name real quick. So I used my middle name which is Dawn. But I later found out that there was also another Kimberly Dawn on record, so I had to come up with something else. So I decided on the last name of Dawson."

She dismisses DEADLY ADDICTION ('88) as "pretty much a bimbo role, and kind of ridiculous. It was another one of those parts where I just looked pretty, waved and said 'Hi' to all the guys and they whistled at me. There was not a whole lot of substance."

During the next three years, Dawson's name often surfaced in the B-movie grapevine as a player who was credible, disciplined and drop-dead gorgeous. Casting directors solicited film roles, but each was tagged to a 15a clause "There had been several offers that involved nudity, but I had turned them down," says Dawson. "I fig-

ured I didn't have to do that. But, by 1991, I decided it was time to reevaluate things. And I decided it was more important to work. However, I decided that I would only do nudity if the part itself offered some kind of acting challenge."

And then the work multiplied. Occasionally, Dawson was not required to disrobe. "In THE ARRIVAL (1990), I played a lesbian who was thanking about going the other way. There were no love scenes. My girlfriend and I pick up this hitchhiker who turns out to be an alien and he kills us. And in THE GIRLS OF THE SUNSET STRIP (1993), I played a prostitute who ends up getting killed by one of her tricks. Surprisingly, that was one of those films where I still had my clothes on."

The next couple of years were an exploratory period in which Dawson appeared, often nude, in a number of art films that were denied release. When queried about the movies, the actress professes a sort of impromptu

amnesia. VIPER (1994), a Lorenzo Lamas vehicle, cast her as a promiscuous girlfriend with not much dialogue and even less substance. The closest thing to a real challenge at that time was DANCE OF THE PENDULUM ('95), in which her character, "Sally," turned out to be a cartoon!

SURF, SAND AND SEX matched Dawson with 15 minutes worth of residual celebrity. "Kato Kahl and I were friends and he called me right before Christmas 1994, complaining about how he needed money. He told me, 'I don't really want to do B-movies, but I've got a kid and it's Christmas-time. Can you help me out?' So I got him this small part in the film I was starring in. We didn't have any scenes together and, ultimately, I regretted getting him the part because, after he went through that whole O.J. thing, a lot of people trashed him for that movie. For me, that film was fun. I was the leader of this group of girls who started all the trouble and

sat around talking about sex all the time. There was a lot of improvisation involved, and I felt the film helped me grow as an actress."

But her career was still developing in slow, incremental steps. The handshake had nothing to do with her historic aptitude, it was all anatomy. "The only reason I wasn't getting certain parts was that I had real breasts," she shrugs. "A lot of directors did not want to deal with the fact that my body moved when I walked or laid down. I was really taken aback by that because I felt I had real, beautiful breasts and I wasn't getting hired because of them. But I knew that if I had surgery, my breasts would be tremendously huge and I just couldn't do that to myself!"

She was again cast as a hooker in SEXUAL OUTLAWS, one of many films that required her to fake an orgasm. "I just look at it as acting," smiles Dawson. "It's simulated sex, nothing more. I get bothered when people call what I do soft-core. My feeling is that what I'm doing is either pornography or it isn't. If you're not really doing it, then it isn't pornography."

She does recall one incident—but blocks retention of the film's title—where the line between real and simulated was crossed. "I was doing this movie and the guy I was working with...well, it was obviously his first time. At one point, he really put his hand inside me. I was laying there and I could see that they had three cameras rolling. I knew in my mind what the cost would be of reshooting this scene, and I didn't really want to hurt the boy's feelings or embarrass him. But I needed to say something and I didn't want to run the tape. Usually, I just stood up, took his hand off me and out of me and I said, 'Will somebody please tell him that we're not supposed to really be doing this stuff? When you've told him that,

come and get me, I'll be in my dressing room.' Right after I made this long speech, the director said, 'Cut!'

Though she was consistently cast in films, Dawson was frustrated with her typecasting as one-dimensional prostitutes, strippers and bimbos. "I saw that I was being pigeonholed into being a B-movie star," she says. "It began to bother me that, despite seven years of acting classes, I was never going to be in a position to cross over and pick up an Oscar or an Emmy. But I took comfort in the fact that I always seemed to find something in the roles that was a challenge. I got something out of it. Of course, sometimes the experiences didn't turn out like I hoped they would. But, for the most part, I was pretty happy with the stuff I was being offered."

Matter of fact, a B-farce called *THE PERFECT GIFT* ('94) is one of her faves. "I play a girl who's deciding what to give her boyfriend on his birthday," grins Dawson. "It was a hilarious comedy and easily one of my best acting roles. It also had a lot of nudity in it, but when the USA network aired it, they cut all the nudity out." The following year's *VOYEUR*, one of the very few erotic thrillers directed by a female (Deborah Shames), featured the top-billed Dawson as "a woman with a seven year itch." She was supported by Ma Shames, who played Dawson's secretary, and Gwen Somers (*HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS*). Cast as a practitioner of the *ULTIMATE TABOO*, Dawson played a very kinky temptress who indulged her bondage fantasies while conspiring to deep-six her spouse. "I'd love to give the storylines that much credit," she laughs, "but, to be honest, I wouldn't give them that much credit."

During this period, her romantic venue had eroded; after protracted engagement, Dawson broke up with a long-time lover. "I re-



THE ROAD: writer/star Dawson (5) shot a behind-the-scenes sales (6) of exploitation commerce. Morphing her focus to raise the production money, Dawson—overseeing autonomy—desired a studio suit's \$20,000 offer to buy her script

ally haven't had much of a personal life over the past few years," she says. "I've made it a point to never get involved with actors or directors. It was kind of an unspoken policy in my own head."

A 1996 Western, *RIDERS IN THE STORM*, approximated Dawson's closest flirtation with a mainstream movie. The veteran cast included Doug McClure, Be Hopkins and Morgan Brittany. Dawson portrayed "Classy," a character that invoked the panache of Calamity Jane ("Unfortunately they cut out my hot tub scene"). Supporting B-goddesses Lorissa McComas and Tane McClure (daughter of the aforementioned Doug McClure) in *LAP DANCING*, Dawson's role as an abused stripper garnered some positive reviews from the mainstream press.

But she was still stuck in debilitating low-budgeters like *SECRET PLACES* and *MAUI HEAT* (both 1996). While shooting the latter



film, Dawson recalls "coming to a crossroads. I realized I hadn't really written anything in 16 years and thought, 'When I get back from Hawaii, I'm going to do something about it.' I came up with this story idea called *Corral Fate*. I wrote the script and then tried to get somebody else to produce it."

Dawson initially con-

ferred with her show biz compatriots to draw some revenue for the production of her script. She was greeted with enthusiasm, but the back-patting dissolved into antipathy when it came time to jumping in the trenches and doing the legwork. The actress realized the only way the movie was going to get made was if

she financed it herself.

"I'm a very observant person—even though I'm a blonde," she laughs while recalling her odyssey from actress to producer. "I decided to take the business training I had, from selling real estate, and apply it to film business. I called in favors from actors, directors, crew people, all the people I worked with. I asked them, 'Can you look at this script and tell me if you can work on it?' Before I knew it, I had a whole group of people put together. To get the money, I refinanced my house."

Her rookie status as a producer notwithstanding, the shooting of CARNAL FATE proceeded rather smoothly. Dawson, who starred in the film, sprinted in front of and behind the cameras. It was on-the-job training, with monitoring the logistics and budget. When production wrapped, Dawson shopped the film around to prospective dis-

KIM DAWSON

"I don't see mainstream Hollywood calling. You don't get these kinds of offers when you're working like I do; but I don't lose sleep over it. I pay the mortgage and have a beautiful home."



Dawson was also a triple threat (writer/producer/star, 1) on CARNAL FATE. (2) She refinanced my house to get money, I called in favors from actors and crews.

going to be one queen on the set. I had only shot a few scenes, yet they tried to sell the movie with the claim that I was its star—and that kind of bothered me."

In the meantime, profits from CARNAL FATE's foreign and domestic sales rolled in. Dawson was flush, but not for long. "I may not have done the smartest thing with the money. I took all the profits from CARNAL FATE and put it into another film that I wanted to write and produce." She entered as an auteur for THE ROAD, a semi-autobiographical, cautionary tale of an innocent ingenue who drops into Tinseltown and faces the B-movie milieu's tribulations. "It's a black comedy about what happened to me in Hollywood," says Dawson. "I had the focus on a great story. Initially, my idea for making THE ROAD was so I could star in a film where I didn't have to take my clothes off. But later on, I realized that it didn't matter. I had made the choices and I should be proud of them."

Never mind that CARNAL FATE was a commercial success; raising funds for THE ROAD proved equally problematic. A studio executive offered Dawson \$25,000 for the script as long as Dawson surrendered her autonomy. The actress, however, opted to raise the lion's share of the budget by mortgaging her house. Good will once again rallied a voluntary cast, crew and equipment. Though her past experience expedited the pace of production, Dawson was unnerred by a personal tragedy.

"My sister was shot four times by her husband in front of their child. As it turned out, he never spent a day in jail. He remarried and is fighting for the custody of his daughter. Initially, I had planned on putting any profits from THE ROAD into making another movie. But when my sister was killed, I decided any profits would go into battered women's shelters and to



tributors.

"A producer I knew said he would buy the film for foreign distribution," she remembers. "He said, 'I'll pay you this much,' and I said 'That's more than I've got in it.' He said, 'I know but it's worth it.' I said, 'Well, I still own the domestic rights' and he said, 'Yeah and you can go sell those to somebody else.' So I sold the domestic rights to HBO."

She renewed her acting

vocation with a role as the owner of an S&M bar in STRIPTEASER 2 ('97), one of producer Roger Corman's one-week wonders (the film is padded with footage from the far superior NAKED OBSESSION, also produced by Corman). DREAMBOAT recruited the actress with Leona McComas. Cost opposite former pro football player Bob Golic, Dawson played a trophy girlfriend. Though pretty routine stuff, the script was classic Moe-

rie Ryskind compared to Surrender Cinema's erotic, "time-traveling fantasy," LURID TALES: THE CASTLE QUEEN.

"I was in Romania doing LURID TALES and the director didn't like me," insists Dawson. "He didn't want my input. At one point, I asked that water he brought to the set and he refused. Finally, he just fired me. The director was gay, and I think he had it in his mind that there was only

keeping the memory of my sister alive."

Dawson submitted *THE ROAD*, her very personal film, to the Sundance Film Festival. Though the cine-clebs rejected her film from the competition, Dawson circumvented the politics. "Because I lived in the area, I knew a lot of people. And when they found out what I was going to do with the profits from showing the film, they helped me set up a series of screenings at a private theater during the run of Sundance. All the profits went to the local battered women's shelters."

Dawson garnered plenty of press for her defiant stand against Sundance's sovereignty. Dawson philosophically summarizes the experience: "I don't know if that experience changed my opinion about what I should do, but it definitely solidified my feelings that sometimes you make a choice in life and you can't go back on it. You've got to follow your dreams as best you can but, sometimes, you have to do certain things and you can't regret it."

Once the triumph of *THE ROAD* wore off, it was back to the usual grind. Dawson wrapped a couple of films, *BIKINI HOUSE CALLS* and *BIKINI MEDICAL SCHOOL*, in only eight days and then cruised to Prague for a role in *SHADOW WARRIOR*, a sci-fi shoot-'em-up directed by Lloyd A. Simandl (*CHAINED HEAT II*). Then there was *I LIKE TO PLAY GAMES 2*, *ES-CORT 3*, *THE BIG HUSTLE*.

"I feel much better these days about the kinds of movies I'm doing," Dawson grins. "I don't have any conflict with it now. I don't see mainstream Hollywood ever calling. You don't get those kinds of offers when you're working like I do. But I'm not going to lose any sleep over it. I'm paying my mortgage, I have a beautiful home, beautiful friends, my roses are thriving and I'm getting paid to act. I'd have to say I'm in a pretty good place." □



"I photographed Kim in a leotard Beverly Hills house," says Jan Dean. "I'm amazed she's still sane after everything that she's witnessed in her career."

Claudia Jennings

Lost Highway

SHE WAS THE QUEEN OF THE DRIVE-IN DIVAS: THE DEFINITIVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES CHRONICLE OF HER LIFE & TRAGIC DEATH.

BY ARI BASS

October 2, 1979: Claudia Jennings could hear the wind pour over Laurel Canyon as she paced the floor of her Hollywood Hills home on Yucca Lane. She looked at the clock. Though it was late in the evening, she was too anxious to sleep.

It had been ten years since her first appearance in



Top: Photo (right) Heiber's own screenplay; Jennings with her and his two girlfriends, Playmate Burti Santora, taping the final episode of *PLAYBOY AFTER DARK* (May '77); L: Campaign for Jennings' cult classic, *TRUCK STOP WOMEN*.

Playboy magazine, she spent half of the decade curving a niche as Hollywood's Queen of the B's, and the other half trying to dethrone herself of that film sovereignty. Her troubles of the moment were a combination of career doubts and the unraveling of her relationship with wealthy Beverly Hills realtor Stan Herman.

Five-foot-six and 109 pounds, she was still a stunning woman. At a glance, the 29-year-old looked much as she did upon her 1969 arrival in L.A., except for

some weight loss and the obligatory blonde highlights in her natural Auburn hair.

Early the next morning, after having been up most of the night, she called a friend, Jacqui Cohen, in Vancouver. Jennings and Stan had broken up, and this time, she insisted, it was for good. Jennings was depressed and pretty much at wit's end. It was a story Cohen had heard before.

When Cohen inquired what she was going to do,

Jennings announced step one: "I've got to go to Stan's and get my stuff." Jennings hung up, pulled a sweat-shirt over her tank top and, at around 8:15 a.m., climbed into her little white 1978 Volkswagen convertible and roared out of the Hills, down Laurel Canyon, sped west on Sunset Boulevard and then up the Pacific Coast Highway.

Her long, strawberry blonde hair danced in the wind that quiet Wednesday morning, as the pile of #x10 head shots blew around on the floor behind her. In the calm, there was time to think. She was two and a half months from her 30th birthday. Where was she headed? She felt very tired.

She was alone.

Evanston

The boys in tenth grade homeroom couldn't help but notice her. It was 1966, and 16-year-old Mary Ellen Chesterton, known since childhood as Mimi, had transferred to Evanston Township High School. Striking, with her red hair, bottomless green eyes and chiseled features, she instantly became one of the





Jennings strikes poses on a Georgian locale (Oct. '76). She and her party weathered a severe winter. The *Playmate* developed a crush on this postcard's photographer.



half-dozen most beautiful girls in a class of more than one thousand kids.

Mimi had been uprooted before. She was born in St. Paul, Minnesota on December 20, 1949, and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her father, Gerard, worked in advertising but had been unemployed for a number of her school years. Once he secured a new job with Motorola in Chicago, Mimi and her sisters were pulled from school mid-semester as the family migrated south.

Evanston, the first suburb north of Chicago, was a comfortable, WASPy, upper-middle class community of fewer than 80,000 residents.

The eldest of three daughters, Mimi was both liberated and pressured to succeed. Her mother Joan, a teacher, placed a premium on education and, by all accounts, the Chesterton girls grew up in an intellectually advantaged atmosphere.

Artistic expression had always been encouraged in the Chesterton household too. Back in Milwaukee, Mimi's mother enrolled her in acting classes at Marquette University when she was ten. The aspiring actress eventually recruited kids from the neighborhood, around her home on Farwell

in Jennings, since June, 74. **R** The actress, as Ruby Hart in tow, greets Hugh Hefner at the MACBETH premiere (71). **Hef** co-produced the pic.



Avenue, to put on little plays in her garage and backyard. Later that year, she got her first taste of the footlights when she appeared in a local repertory production of *The King and I*.

In Evanston, Mimi was a show-in as one of her school's cheerleading squad. By junior year, she gravitated to the drama department and auditioned for a production of *Inherit the Wind*. One of her classmates, Todd McCarthy—now chief film critic for *Variety*—was student assistant director. "There being no part for her, she was relegated to the background as an extra," he recounted, "and I believe she dropped out of the play before it was performed."

McCarthy, who fancied himself a budding filmmaker, had been making short films almost every weekend. "I started wanting to make serious films instead of these one-reel comedies. So I came up with this kind of allegorical, symbolic, dramatic film to shoot and I wanted her to be in it. She agreed."

McCarthy shot his masterpiece in August 1967. "What a catch for me to have her in that little film I did, because she just had that fantastic look and a magnetism. And for a stupid film of, basically, just a girl walking around for ten minutes, who better to have than that?"

By the start of senior year, despite his hunch (later confirmed) that "she was dating jocks from arch-rival New Trier High School and 'men' from Northwestern University," McCarthy asked Mimi out. To his relief, "She immediately said yes!" During one evening out, Mimi revealed that a friend had landed a job at the Chicago office of *Playboy* magazine, and had proposed that she model for some test shots. "I told her, 'No way,'" said Mimi. "I wouldn't do that."

She garnered excellent grades in school, and earned the title of National Merit

"She is lovely with something vulnerable, sensitive, even haunted in her eyes," wrote John Simon. "She makes a spotlight light up as no wattage could do it."



Jewelry in *DEATHSPORT*, a "quasi-sequel" to *DEATH RACE 2000*. As a result of problems on the set, director Nick Nacopar was replaced by Allan Arkush.

Scholar, but while her parents hoped she would attend a good university, Mimi devoted only a half-hearted interest, only hectoring to submit applications to a couple of nondescript colleges. She had made up her mind: Mimi would forfeit a higher education to become an actress, and turn to modeling as both a means of sustenance and a platform toward her goal. To her parents, the notion of making it on one's looks was the ultimate act of rebellion.

After graduating in 1968, the 18-year-old moved out of her parents' place and into a bachelorette apartment on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. She had some professional photos taken, with which she obtained a few regional modeling gigs, and joined the Hull House Theater company. After a couple of months, however, Mimi realized that neither her modeling nor her acting was doing much to get her noticed—or pay the bills. To make matters worse, Chicago quickly became the center of the maelstrom sur-

rounding the 1968 Democratic Convention, culminating in a full-fledged riot on August 30th. Broadcast to nearly 60 million viewers, the riot sent shock waves throughout the nation, and Chicagoans saw first-hand that the times they were a-changing'. On Tuesday, September 3rd, Mimi was hired for a job at *Playboy* magazine's office on North Michigan Avenue. "She was the receptionist on the tenth floor, where I worked," recalled Thomas Staebler, the magazine's current Art Director.

Mimi had barely received her first paycheck before a *Playboy* photographer, Pompey Posar, took notice of her and asked her to test. Though secretly fearing that she might not be busty enough to qualify as a *Playmate*, she agreed. Only three weeks to the day after she started work at the office, Mimi nervously disrobed for her test shots.

The event was so much more clinical than she had envisioned. "How awkward," she thought, as

Posar began to click away. But he worked quickly and professionally, and it was over before she knew it. She impulsively covered her nakedness as Posar casually unslung his camera and told her how well she had done. Dazed from the lights and the adrenaline, Mimi smiled, dressed and returned to her desk.

There was one other man who took notice of Michigan Avenue's newest receptionist—one Hugh Marston Hefner, *Playboy* founder, direct descendant of Puritan patriarchs William Bradford and John Winthrop, 42-year-old divorced father of two, icon to his generation and self-styled king of the cocktail nation. Even more than these things, Hef represented that most American of figures: the self-made man. Mimi was genuinely impressed by her boss—particularly his sincerity, intelligence (a genius IQ of 153) and tender manner—and he, in turn, took an immediate liking to the 18-year-old.

After looking over the proofs, the photo staff knew they had something, but Mimi, though perfectly proportioned, needed to lose weight to become a *Playmate*. With a \$5,000 check in the offing, Mimi decided to go for it. She dropped ten pounds and agreed to step before Posar's camera again in March, April and June of 1969.

Somewhere around her 19th birthday, Mimi felt the breeze of free love blow across Lake Michigan, and fell under the spell of her debonair employer, Hefner. He recalled, "She once gave me a kibitz, a long time afterward—some time in the '70s—and it kind of blew me away at the time. She said to me that I was the first man that she'd ever made love to. Whether that was just something said for effect I don't know—it was said in a very dear way—and I expressed my astonishment at that because, certainly, I was not aware of it at the time." Between all the possible constructions of

her statement, one fact remains constant and irrefutable: Mimi was as drawn to sensitivity, passion and romance as she was to mature men of power.

And so it was that 19-year-old Mimi Chesterton became a Playmate. Her pictorial did not appear until November 1969, and when it did, Mimi had rechristened herself "Claudia Jennings" in order, she said, to spare her sisters any embarrassment that may be prompted by her centerfold layout (Hefner's take: "She had professional aspirations in acting. I assumed she changed her name for that reason.") Her new moniker also served another purpose: Mimi had reinvented herself, and obliterated her roots, in one simple, almost vengeful maneuver.

The public response to her magazine appearance was enormous, for yielding in any sort of stigma, the tittie-haired Jennings was destined to become the most perennially popular Playmate of the next decade. Perhaps more significantly, she had found acceptance as a member of the Playboy family.

Another lifelong friend whom Jennings met at the Chicago office, Marilyn Gubowski (now *Playboy's*

Jennings and Hugh Hefner dance to Woody Herman's band on her final day as Playmate of the Year, 5/1/71.



"She said I was the first man that she'd ever made love to," recalls Hugh Hefner. "I expressed my astonishment at that because I wasn't aware of it at the time."



Jennings in GATOR BAIT. "Within a couple of weeks, we made a half million dollars on it," recalls the co-producer. "After 18 months, we made \$15 million."

West Coast Photo Editor), recalled, "She had a devil-may-care attitude. She was always looking forward to her next escape...and I think she always wanted to be a star."

During the fall season when her pictorial was launched, she flew to Los Angeles to test the waters. Jennings ended up participating in a Bill Cosby comedy LP before signing on for a two-month tour of the South and Southwest in a repertory production of *The Tender Trap*. Upon her return to L.A., the Playmate was offered her first film role in an independent picture, with artistic pretensions, called *JUD*. The dreary story concerned a Vietnam vet's difficulty in adjusting to life back in the U.S.A. As "Sunny," a girl with whom the title character spends a night on the beach, Jennings was required to perform an awkward, topless love scene; it looks as if the crew had to get it on film fast or risk getting busted for shooting on a public beach.

Still, Hollywood was ev-

erything Jennings assumed it would be: stars, pimps, pushers, flower children, limousines, Manson murders, lots of parties. She knew she was ready for it.

Jennings returned to Chicago, which suddenly looked more off-white and unlovely than ever, and withdrew her nest egg to finance a permanent move to Los Angeles. According to *Playboy* personnel files, she officially quit her job on December 17, 1969, three days before her 20th birthday.

Upon her official arrival in Tinseltown, Jennings joined three roommates in a big house on Gramercy Place in Hollywood. It wasn't long before one roommate, Allison Granna, tried to set up the new girl in town with slim, handsome songwriter/musician Bobby Hart, who had previously dated one of her ex-roommates.

With hopes of becoming a radio disc jockey, Hart had moved to L.A. from Phoenix on New Year's Day 1968. After meeting Virginian Tammy Boyce, the two teen-

formed a band and began writing songs. In 1964, after moving to New York to join the Brill Building music scene, they composed their first Boyce & Hart smash, Jay and the Americans' *Come A Little Bit Closer*. Bet with the British Invasion in full force, it soon became clear that the real action in American popular music was on the West Coast, confining in the hip club along the Strip. The duo returned to L.A. and later became famous for producing (and performing on) The Monkees' first album, and composing the *Monkees Theme*, *Last Train To Clarksville* and others.

In January 1970, Granna reached Hart, who had just returned from Las Vegas, where he and Boyce had performed their final gig. "I got a call from Allison saying there was someone she wanted me to meet," recalled Hart. "I was kind of burned out from Vegas, and I didn't call her back for a while. Finally, at the end of January or so, I called her and she said, 'Oh, she's not here now, she's shooting her Playmate of the Year layout.' Then I realized I'd made a mistake by writing [laughs]." Jennings later joked that once Hart heard she was 1970 Playmate of the Year, "the phone never stopped ringing" at her house. When Jennings returned two weeks later, she and Hart, who "had a big reputation as a swinger," finally met.

Jennings later described their first date as "instantaneous impact." The couple decided on dinner at Diamond Jim's on Hollywood Boulevard. When it came time for dessert, Hart asked, "Why don't we go to my house for a cup of tea?" They drove to his small, two bedroom house on Woodrow Wilson Drive, in the Hollywood Hills. A fierce wind blew through the Hills that night. Jennings later recalled, "We finally put the kettle on, and I guess the water just boiled away all night."

Ten days lapsed until Jennings heard again from Hart, who invited her to a star-studded Jimmy Webb concert on Saturday night, February 21st. The Playmate had plans to leave for Europe with a girlfriend a few days later, so Hart had caught her just in time. "On that second date, she said she didn't like casual relationships and she really wanted a commitment. I said 'When?' I thought she was coming on a little strong. I said, 'It's got to be up to both of us,' or something like that. We kind of left it like that, and she went off to Europe. When she came back, we got together again and, within a few months, she moved in with me."

"I hadn't ever lived with a guy before," Jennings later said. "But I tell you, when I make up my mind what's good for me, it usually is."

This Year's Girl

In March, before she had returned to the States, Jennings appeared on a TV "documentary" entitled, **THE NUDDY THING**, opposite an unlikely ensemble that included Elliott Gould and Otto Preminger. Jennings played peekaboo with the camera during her segment, which was shot concurrently with her Playmate of the Year photo sessions. Back from Europe, and still looking like a fish out of water, Jennings appeared on the final episode of Hugh Hefner's **PLAYBOY AFTER DARK** TV series, where she and Connie Kreski, 1969 Playmate of the Year, were given little to do but stand behind Buddy Rich's drum kit and look pretty. After the taping wrapped, they all joined Hef at a party in his 607-style penthouse pad on the Strip.

Hart had yet to come through with his commitment of monogamy, so Claudia accepted invitations to become the arm candy of such celebrities as Warren Beatty, Johnny Carson (then in the early stages of a



Jennings in "Desire" at CATON HAY (1976). "We had to shift the shooting schedule all around to fit into Claudia's busy schedule," recalls co-producer Fred Sebastian. "If she wasn't my friend, I probably wouldn't have been able to cast her."

lengthy divorce) and flamboyant financial impresario, Bernie Cornfeld.

That spring, Jennings landed a role in an off-Broadway revival of *Dark of the Moon*, opposite Marcia Wallace and Rue McClanahan. Famed (and feared) critic John Simon wrote, "[Jennings] is a completely lovely girl with something sensitive, vulnerable, per-

haps even haunted in her eyes and around her mouth. She makes a spotlight light up as no wattage could do it. At all times, she makes you forget the dimness of the play she is trapped in..."

After an exciting month in the Big Apple, Jennings journeyed back home to L.A., and soon checked into a hospital after suffering some seizures. "She had

been taking these B¹² shots in New York from a doctor, and I think that, probably, he had been putting some speed in it as well, which was kind of common in those days," Hart reasoned. "She took on these very physically demanding roles, and she was much more frail than anybody ever knew."

Jennings soon realized

the hard truth: her *Playboy* credentials would get her only so far in the movies, so she signed with an aggressive agent, Michael Grossfield, who also represented Linda Evans and Victoria Principal. Before long, Jennings went off to Florida to perform her first film lead in a three-week western called *WILLY AND SCRATCH*, shot on an old standing set. Exploitation filmmaker Robert Emery wrote, produced, directed and edited the odd film, which involved a fight over stolen money. The central setting was a ghost town, wiped out by a plague. "As a person, Claudia was nothing like what you saw in *Playboy*," recalled Emery. "She was very smart, she knew that she wanted a career and she was going to go after it. And she was willing to do these low-budget pictures to get herself seen. She was just a joke a minute. She never lost her temper, never got upset. We were filming a small movie under some adverse conditions, but she never complained."

Upon returning to Hollywood, Jennings was quickly engaged by Jack Haley, Jr. for an appearance in *THE LOVE MACHINE* (1971), an adaptation of the Jacqueline Susann bestseller; he was directing for Columbia. Jennings had a bit part as one of a parade of beauties headed by a power hungry newscaster (played by John Phillip Law). "Claudia had been a personal friend of mine," Haley revealed. "So I was doing this picture with a lot of beautiful girls in it and I said, 'Claudia, let's do it.' You know, Claudia was a real live wire; she was great fun to be around. When she did *THE LOVE MACHINE*, it was like a lark for her. It was not a major career move in any sense of the word."

Life's finer frumpies sat well upon Jennings, and she looked back at her first year in Lotus Land with satisfaction: this was the fast life she had dreamed of. Unfortunately, the lifestyle of the

"She was willing to do low budget pictures to get herself seen," says director Robert Emery. "She was a joke a minute. Never lost her temper, never got upset."



Jennings in one of *THE UNHOLY ROLLERS* (72). In new Roberta Collins (74) on screen. Maria Scorsese, then an apprentice filmmaker, edited the scene.

day consisted of more than Sunday night Monopoly games with Haf and dips in the jacuzzi. With pharmaceuticals in abundant supply, she found the temptation too great and was hured into the thrallhold of churid bliss.

Following a minor role as the stoner wife of a cheesy director in Hikmet Avved's thriller *IMPULSION* (which debuted two years later, June 1973, as *THE STEP-MOTHER*), Jennings felt proud to grace 16 pages of the November 1971 issue of *New Woman*, a "women's lib" magazine. Through her calculated spin on her post (including references to her English degree from the University of Chicago and her job as a guide in the *Playboy* building), she offered some insight into her ambitions. "[*Playboy*] offered me \$5,000 to do it and I needed the money. It got me to Hollywood where I just finished my first film! You may call that compromise but I used it to arrive exactly where I wanted. I'm working at acting on my

terms. I'm in control." Later in the piece she maintained, "It's not my aim in life to pose nude or to be a sexual object; it was a concession I made. To me, it was simply a step—a rung in the ladder toward my ultimate goal. I've gone on to something else, I don't need to do that again."

Regarding her relationship with Hart, Jennings said, "He's totally sympathetic to everything I feel. We're completely committed to each other." By admitting that the couple had no intention of marrying, Jennings cast herself as the archetypal *New Woman*: "I wish I could find one good reason for marrying but, so far, I've found only reasons for not marrying. That document isn't going to make your relationship work if it isn't a good one, so what's the point? Even if I were going to have children, I wouldn't marry. Naturally, I'd want to rear them with my man helping me, but a piece of paper won't keep him with me if he doesn't want to stay. The children

wouldn't suffer from having unmarried parents because I wouldn't live in a community which would hurt them for it. I was reared as a Catholic in the Midwest, and I think that I was taught a lot of harmful things. I wish I could believe in life after death, though, because it's such a nice thought. Reward for living a good life is so fair; I'd like to think it's true, but I'm afraid I'm more of a realist than that."

Hart remembered that "Claudia had not developed her spiritual side much and, [although] she didn't resent that I was a searcher and that I was interested in Eastern religion, she didn't want to know about it. She thought it was all bull."

By the fall of 1971, although she was more often on film locations than at home, Jennings and Hart decided to look for a bigger house. In the spring of '72, after moving twice, Jennings found a beautiful mini-mansion which had belonged to Gower Champion sitting back on a hill on Woodrow Wilson. The couple moved in on Memorial Day.

The same year, Jennings starred in Verlen Zimmerman's roller derby classic, *UNHOLY ROLLERS*, which Roger Corman produced for American International. The picture—a low budget option to Raquel Welch's *KANSAS CITY BOMBER*—constituted Jennings' most important movie to date. On screen, Jennings offered the first glimpse of what would endear her to a generation of fans: the commanding personality, the beauty and grace, the all-American smile. But the scale of Jennings' future celebrity was dwarfed by that of the film's supervising editor, Martin Scorsese, fresh from directing *BOXCAR BERTHA* (72) for Corman, needed cash prior to putting together his masterful *MEAN STREETS* (1973).

Toad McCarthy managed to catch up with Jennings on a summer '72 trip to L.A. He recalled, "She talked

very affectionately about Hefner, personally, and about the whole *Playboy* experience. She viewed it as a breakthrough for her." Though McCarthy still called her Mimi, and she did not correct him, he noted that all her post-*Playboy* friends referred to her as Claudia.

Jennings shot three more movies in 1972, beginning with *GROUP MARRIAGE* (1973). The comedy, directed and co-written by German graduate Stephanie Rothman, chronicled a California ménage-a-quatre that becomes a test case. Next, the actress netted her first "A" film role with Columbia's *40 CARATS* (1973), opposite Lev Ullmann and Edward Albert. Director Milton Kates recalled, "She wanted very much to be good and to satisfy. That seemed like a very important part of her. I remember after the scene, she asked me—two or three times—had she done well, and was this what I wanted. And that she was so pleased to have done it."

Jennings also starred in the first of two films for the husbands/wife team of Ferd and Beverly Sebastian. A murder mystery set on an island retreat for couples suffering marital problems,

7. Jennings in 1974, arguably at the peak of her popularity. 8. With Hugh Hefner, introducing Sharon Clark as *Playboy's* Playmate of the Year (71).



THE SINGLE GIRLS (1973) represented the very definition of exploitation fare. Still, the warmth of the Sebastians' "little family operation" touched Jennings, and the couple became two of her closest friends.

The actress rounded out an incredibly busy year appearing as an imperiled sorority sister in director Joseph Mazzuca's **SISTERS OF DEATH**. Jennings was among the first actresses cast. "It was a very, very low budget picture," recalled Mazzuca. "Besides being right for the part, Claudia's [Playmate fame] was an added plus for the picture, commercially. We needed a name." Jennings regarded the three-week shoot, on location in a spooky mansion up near Santa Barbara, as a learning experience. Sure, the days were long, but at least she was able to drive home to see Hart on the weekends.

The director remembered, "Before we shot the scene where the villain is looking through a vent in the wall and she was going through her undressing bit, to join the people at the pool, she said, 'Am I going to have to... you know?' and I said, 'No, because we're really going for a PG with this. Undo the bra with your hand to us and then, as you start to take down your panties, we'll cut.' I could see the great relief on her face. That struck me."

The film's story was substandard even as stalker fare: five security members gather for a reunion, and each maintains a terrible secret from the past. Low on thrills and production value, the resulting PG-rated film had difficulty attracting a distributor and failed to net a significant release until August 1977.

Jennings' private life had become busier too. When both of Hart's children, who lived in Phoenix with his ex-wife, Becky, experienced trouble in school that year, the actress—who missed her sisters more each day—saw this as a splendid op-

"I'm cast as bad girls because being submissive is alien to me," said Jennings. "I can't play the wronged wife!—you would not believe a man cheats on me!"



Jennings is one of **THE UNHOLY FOLLIES** (A better room-look at the world's loudest broads!). She befriended her co-stars (of were "real dirty sisters.")



portunity. Jennings told Hart that the kids needed a change of environment and, in the fall, 11-year-old Bobby Jr. moved to Woodrow Wilson Drive.

"With Claudia and Bobby, there was always a sense of family," said Marilyn Grabowski. "There would be people over for the holidays. Claudia liked a lot of coyness around her." Jennings attracted actress Selly Kirkland, who compared the Woodrow Wilson house to an ashram. "Claudia took me in as if I was a long lost child," related Kirkland. "She dressed me for auditions in her finest silk, in-

cluded me to all the Thanksgivings and Christmases and basically gave me my first L.A. home."

"Claudia's dad told me she was always bringing home stray animals," added Hart. "She continued that and took it into the field of people later in her life. It seemed like there was always someone in the guest room who needed a place to stay for a while. I admired her for that, although it became a little strange from time to time having people around."

"She knew everybody in town," Marilyn Grabowski smiled. "She was very, very

loyal to her friends. You wouldn't see her for three months, and then she'd come hopping in to see you. There was no such thing to her as losing a friend. She collected them constantly."

Her career clearly on a roll, Jennings spent four weeks of early 1973 in New Mexico filming **TRUCK STOP WOMEN** (1974) for director Mark L. Lester. Jennings played "Rose," the rebellious daughter of a truck stop cafe owner whose sidelines include hi-jacking and prostitution, often using Rose as bait. Adding to the film's realism, Jennings and some of the other actors learned to drive trucks for the film. Savoring her new "tough" screen image, Jennings later loved to brag that she could "turn a mock truck on a dime."

"When I finished the movie, there wasn't enough sex in it according to the distributors," Lester remembered. "They said, 'Well, nothing ever happens—the truck stop women are never naked and they never do anything sexy.' So I shot a couple of extra days. That's when I did the sex scene with Claudia."

At the same time, the Sebastians began developing their next project, specifically with Jennings in mind. **GATOR BAIT**, an action film set in the swampland, linked the actress with "Desiree"—a sexy but deadly bayou beauty—who is an indelible component of Jennings' screen legacy. "Claudia wanted to do it because she wanted to do a show that she didn't have to talk a lot in," Ferd laughed. "She just wanted to be this animal and run around."

That spring, Jennings and the Sebastians drove down to Caddo Lake, Texas, just across the border from Shreveport, Louisiana, in the Sebastians' motor home. Once principal photography was completed, an exhausted Jennings headed home to recover. A few weeks later, Jennings told reporter James Bacon that she never planned on becoming a star

of low-budget movies: "I would have much sooner started out with the Sarah Miles' part in RYAN'S DAUGHTER but I wanted to work most of all and get experience. And I got plenty of it.

"I could have been doing one day bits in big movies but I wouldn't have been learning my trade. In the low-budget movies, I am the star. I work every day and I learn something new every day. I feel now that I am ready to make the jump to the big movies. I have served my apprenticeship."

Jennings also made light of the peculiar benefits of cost-constrictive filmmaking. "In TRUCK STOP WOMEN," she explained, "I even learned how to drive those big 16-speed diesel trucks. That alone gives me something to fall back on." As for GATOR BAIT, she joked, "On this picture I learned how to pick up an armadillo and swing it. So far, I can't see where this will ever come in handy. I also had a few encounters with alligators. No future in that." With determination, the actress vowed, "I'm through with the low budget pictures unless the script and director knock me out."

Anxious to expand her range, the actress studied acting with Jeff Corey. Soon thereafter, Jennings accepted the role of "Rusty" in a road company production of LENNY. The show played San Francisco in June and July. According to Sally Kirkland, Mrs. (Honey) Bruce hugged Jennings and lauded her with, "Thank God, it was you."

The former Playmate did a guest spot on the wholesome BRADY BUNCH series in 1973. The episode, titled "Adios, Johnny Bravo," guest-starred Jennings as a seductive agent who promises to make Greg a star—provided he change his name to Johnny Bravo. The episode aired in September, and served to finally demonstrate that Jennings could project beyond her typecasting as a sexpot. Offered the



"Claude posed for this Jane '78 photo which, until its unveiling here, remained unpublished," says An Kern. "Looking rather dressy, she was in the midst of a tumultuous time."



Behind-the-scenes from **THE GREAT TEXAS DYNAMITE CHASE** (77). Jennings poses with co-star Joseph Jones (**TOURIST TRAP**) & director Michael Pressman.

opportunity, Jennings excelled as a smart, strong and sophisticated woman. It was all the more frustrating that, despite her proven television viability, roles in B-movies still comprised the bulk of her auditions.

Bait and Hooks

By early 1974, Jennings was cast with Harvey Keitel in an episode of **THE FBI** series. Planning to pose for *Playboy* again, she translated a new pictorial into a professional asset. But, according to Hart, two other factors prevailed: "They had a lot of money to offer and, if she didn't let them shoot new shots, they would use the old stuff, which they had plenty of." Jennings negotiated her personal selection of five top glamour photographers to shoot her. *Playboy* agreed.

In her agent's opinion, however, "Relying on *Playboy*, from a career standpoint, is ridiculous. An audi-

ence responds to what it sees on the screen. They respond to charisma and good technical skills. What Claudia had was a terrific amount of charisma, she was very sexy, but her biggest problem was she looked a little hard-edged...There wasn't [the appearance] of a well-rounded individual and somebody you would want to hook up to. People don't realize how much of one's persona comes

out on screen." Following the release of **GATOR BAIT**, although Jennings was largely absent from the big screen for nearly two years, her career seemed to be on the upswing. True to her vow, Jennings was holding out for better films. Meanwhile, she did guest spots on TV shows (e.g. **CANNON**), graced *Playboy's* November '74 cover, and returned the following issue with a pictorial.

With Edward Albert & Liv Ullmann in **40 CARATS**. Director Hilton Kelsoles recalls, "Claudia wanted to be good. It seemed like a very important part of her."



In Bruce Williamson's article accompanying her December "Claudia Observed" layout, Jennings shrewdly tried to cast off the image of a B-movie bombshell who occasionally pops up in bigger films, merely wrinkling her nose at the mention of **GROUP MARRIAGE**, **40 CARATS** and **THE LOVE MACHINE**.

Williamson noticed a gold and diamond bracelet on Jennings' wrist during their interview which spelled out **B-I-T-C-H**. "That's what I always play in the movies," she explained. "Though it's the opposite of what I am really, I'm cast as a spitfire—bad girl types—I suppose because being submissive is completely alien to me. There aren't many good female roles in films nowadays, so I figure I'll come in to my own when I'm about 30. At this point, I can't play kids or hippies, and I sure as hell can't play the wronged wife because you

wouldn't believe a man cheats on me."

Another quote, used by Williamson to close the piece on a similar note of "self-assurance," actually reflected much more closely the bravado of painful insecurity: "I'm not like Cicely Tyson, who claims she's never done a thing professionally she can't be proud of. Well, I have. I've done everything the hard way, made a lot of money. Obviously I'm bright. I'm also educated, I'm wealthy, I'm photogenic and a damn good actress." In the end, Williamson hinted that he had caught on. The contradiction between Jennings' tough posturing, and the child-like innocence she displayed showing off the wind-up bathtub toys she had purchased at F.A.O. Schwarz, prompted him to conclude Jennings was "a girl who is whatever she chooses to be..."

Changes

Jennings began 1975 on a high note: her new manager, Jim Hyde (son of Marilyn Monroe's long-time agent Johnny Hyde), got her optioned by Warner Brothers Television to star as Wonder Woman on a new TV pilot. Warner screen-tested her on February 11th, but the role—and subsequent TV series—eventually went to Lynda Carter. Jennings did, however, land a guest spot on the short-lived ABC series *CARIBE*, followed by a stint on NBC's *MOVIN' ON* and CBS' *THE MAN HUNTER*.

That same year, Jennings came to the aid of her friend Sally Kirkland after Kirkland's home burned down, leaving the actress with literally nothing but the suit on her back. Jennings took Kirkland into her own walk-in closets and said, "Take anything you want." Kirkland was stunned: "You can't be serious—anything?" "Anything," Jennings nodded.

Jennings spent part of July in New Mexico filming a small role in *THE MAN*

"Claudia was skin and bones," recounts Bobby Hart. "She got into a circle of people that made cocaine ready available in large quantities. She didn't handle it."



Jennings & Jocelyn Jones in *THE GREAT TEXAS DYNAMITE CHASE*. "Claudia was a favorite of Roger Corman's," recalls the director, "and a complicated lady."

WHO FELL TO EARTH (1976), a sci-fi allegory starring David Bowie. When the film premiered, Jennings was disappointed to find that all that remained of her role was a brief, uncredited topless bit opposite Bernie Casey.

The year 1975 also found her relationship with Hart starting to flicker. A distance grew between them, and the final straw came when Hart told her that he and Tommy Boyce planned to reunite with former Monkees Micky Dolenz and Davy Jones for a "remember when" tour. When Hart revealed his schedule, "it blew Claudia's mind that I had to work during Christmas. She wasn't willing to accept that." While Hart could be forgiving, Jennings—now 25 and restless—was willing to draw a line in the sand. Hart nodded his head, making like he understood, knowing in his heart the curtain had not fallen. The couple made a financial settlement and Jennings purchased a condominium on Larrabee Street in West

Hollywood, which she later traded in for a "fix-er-up" house on Yucca Lane in the Hollywood Hills.

Michael Greenfield observed, "Claudia had a great guy in Bobby Hart. He couldn't have been more supportive, he let her do her own thing. He was a terrific person and, if anything, he was too good for her. Claudia was a bit self-destructive. She always had a wild streak in her, and I think she was a lot wilder than Bobby ever realized or wanted to admit."

It was a difficult time for Jennings. Her frustration with her career only increased as she indulged in the Hollywood party scene. For a time, she holed up with David Bowie in a Century City condo for a brief relationship that was more drug-based than romantic. Following a guest appearance on *THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO*, Jennings' belated return to film work—in early 1976—began with an audition for the lead in *THE GREAT TEXAS DYNAMITE CHASE*.

"She was a favorite of Roger Corman's," recalled Michael Pressman, who made his directorial debut with the film. Pressman found Jennings "a very complicated lady, [who] appeared to be in a lot of emotional turmoil. I knew she had problems, and I could tell that she had all these defenses and she was going through a lot personally but, basically, she was up for the fun of making a movie."

Halfway into production, Jennings injured herself when she ran into a wall during the filming of a minor exit scene. Recalled Pressman, "She was taken to the hospital and there was some internal bleeding; it was a mess. It was no major stunt. She was running in the interior of a bank and tripped or something." Jennings insisted on finishing her scene as best she could before the ambulance arrived.

Production was shut down for two weeks before the insurance company approved the film's completion. When Jennings returned to the set, barely recovered from her injury, she relied on supplemental drugs to get through the remainder of the shoot. She had also lost ten pounds during her hospital stay.

Crawford remembered, "She was acting like she was not in complete possession of her faculties. We were doing one scene where we jump into a car and take off after a bank robbery, and she was driving. She scared both me and [co-star] Jocelyn Jones the way she was driving. It was very erratic and reckless, even after the end of the scene."

Roger Corman placed Todd McCarthy in charge of advertising and publicity for the film, and dispatched him to the set to take some photos. McCarthy was unnerved by his old friend's prima donna demeanor. "On the one hand she could be nice, but there was definitely a veneer there...She did her job but I didn't feel like she was extending herself,

or that she was willing to extend herself a little bit more because we had known each other before."

According to McCarthy, Jennings showed up late, complained about her brief costume, and insisted upon an early departure. "We kissed goodbye somewhat lolly," he recalled, "and, although she later called me warmly to apologize, I never saw her again."

Jacelyn Jones said, "I don't know about her personal life that much but I know that, somewhere around that period, it seemed to me that she was taking a turn. And I think she missed home. She talked about how much I reminded her of her sister... I think she missed the simpler life, so to speak, and yet she was drawn to a very faster lane. I think that the picture may have been a turning point for her in going in some direction that I never followed. I didn't really keep up with her after the film." Similarly, following production, Pressman's communication with the actress was minimal. "I must say that [pauses]—she seemed a little bit like an accident waiting to happen."

"Claudia was a very lovely lady," said Jones, "and had she maybe hooked up with a different kind of group of people, had she chosen to fly with another group, she might have developed up and done other kinds of acting. It's not an uncommon story. There were drugs involved, she was running on drugs, and that was very common in the seventies. That was such a lost time, productively and creatively."

After some time off, and a brief reunion with Bobby Hart, a much healthier Jennings took a supporting role in MOONSHINE COUNTY EXPRESS (1977), which would also be distributed by New World. The movie concerned the clash between a murdered moonshiner's three daughters and the local syndicate boss (William Conrad). In a straight dramatic role—at long last!—

"Claudia had a great guy in Bob Hart," says agent Michael Greenfield. "She always had a wild streak in her. She was a lot wilder than Bobby wanted to admit."



Jennings among the TRUCK STOP WOMEN (1974). "She was very sweet and down to earth," says director Mark L. Lester, "and incredibly easy to work with."

Jennings portrayed the middle sister, with lead Susan Howard (DALLAS) cast as the eldest and Maureen McCormick (THE BRADY BUNCH) as the youngest.

The film was produced by long-time Corman associate Ed Carlin and directed by Gus Trikonis, who had recently shot THE STUDENT BODY (1975) for Corman. The latter film's cinematographer, Gary Graver—a handsome, blonde-haired native of Portland, Oregon—was rehired for MOONSHINE. Graver had come to L.A. in the early 1960s to be an actor. He learned to shoot movies after joining the Navy, where he found himself in the Combat Camera Group. After his tour, he

shot pictures for exploitation filmmakers, including Al Adamson, before calling up Orson Welles out of the blue. Welles took the young cameraman on, and by the time he showed up for work on MOONSHINE COUNTY EXPRESS, Graver had spent six years working with the great director. Partly as a consequence of Welles' demanding schedule, he had recently weathered his second divorce.

Graver immediately fell for Jennings. "We were on location [Nevada City, California] in a great hotel. That's where Claudia and I started going together. [Costar] Albert Salma didn't like his room, so Claudia and I moved in. She was a

great girl, a really 'un-movie star' kind of person. Honest. If I'd say something, she'd say, 'Oh, come on Graver, cut the shit,' or something. A real regular girl."

Although Hart came to visit her on the set, Jennings remained with Graver and, after the production wrapped, the couple moved into a remodeled greenhouse in Beverly Hills. But after several months, Jennings was on the skids again. "She had become very lazy, and her weight was changing a lot," recalled Graver. "She was in with a bad crowd. That's when I left. We just sort of drifted apart, romantically." Following the split, Jennings moved in with Maureen McCormick.

In 1977, Jennings started to date Las Vegas radio cowboy Dean Shendall. A Sands Casino pit boss turned interest-holder in Caesar's Palace, Shendall had many friends in the entertainment industry, a circle in which he was renowned for both his hospitality and the highest quality coke on hand. "Claudia would give you the shirt off her back," he remembered. "She was a sweet girl... extremely beautiful, inside and out. She liked to come up to my ranch and ride. She liked to do everything every red-blooded American girl did, and she liked to do a few other things besides [laughs]."

"She was wild as a March hare, we all knew that, but everybody was in those days. But she was her own worst enemy."

Deathspout

Back at New World Pictures, director Allan Arkush was still toiling in the trailer department when his boss, Roger Corman, announced his next project: a quasi-sequel to DEATH RACE 2000 (1975). Arkush recalled, "He offered it to everybody and nobody wanted to do it, because it was really half-baked and DEATH RACE 2000 was a really good movie. He hired this guy to do it, Nick Nic-

phor. Nick had never worked for Roger before, and I think he had a limited experience directing."

Gary Graver was hired to lens the picture, and he successfully lobbied Corman, Niephor and star David Carradine to hire Jennings for the female lead because, he later admitted, "I wanted to get back together with her. I was offered a job to shoot HARPER VALLEY PTA, and I didn't take it—I pretended I was too tired and I'd been working too much—because of Claudia."

"Nick didn't have a good time of it," said Arkush. "He didn't shoot the action scenes, he had problems with screen direction...it was a frustrating experience for him, and he didn't get along with the actors on top of it." Graver recalled that "Nick Niephor was just paranoid and crazy and nervous and everything. We all tried to help him, really. He couldn't hack it. Some people shouldn't be on film sets. He was mean to Claudia."

Carradine chronicled the troubled production in *Psychotronic Video* magazine, recalling that after one take of a motorcycle scene, "Nick got into an argument with Claudia. I remember him sort of screaming, 'They told me you could ride a bike!'" Later, Carradine found the entire set in an uproar. "I asked what the whole thing was about and got this story: Nick had pulled Claudia off the bike, thrown her to the ground and jumped on her. The key grip pulled Nick off of her. She ran in tears to the trailer." According to Carradine, Jennings later said, "Oh, the hell with it," and went back to work. Claudia was a trouper.

Corman fired Niephor from DEATHSPORT, and hired Arkush to "go out and shoot for a couple of days, get some motorcycle action and re-cut this thing so it makes sense."

"She was pretty accessible as a person," recalled Arkush. "She was best friends at the time with Maureen McCormick. I



Co-starring with Joseph Kookson, Jennings made her film debut in JUL 68. Cost as "Sharon" in GROSS MARRIAGE (26), the actress was paired with Victoria Vetri (WHEN GINGIS KHAN RULED THE EARTH). The film's director, Stephanie Rothman, remembers Jennings as "so young and so full of promise. And she should be alive today, fulfilling that promise."



think they both liked the Hollywood nightlife at that time. And I think that Claudia was also, like a lot of people at that time, doing quite a bit of coke. I remember at times she was definitely a little 'glazed over' on the set. By that time, she had sort of had it with DEATHSPORT."

Graver, who earlier had

been eager to rekindle his romance with the star, sadly realized that Jennings was "all messed up" during production; it was over for them.

In the middle of the DEATHSPORT fiasco, and perhaps because of it, Jennings signed with the Rush/Fisherty Agency. She soon managed to snag a

guest shot on LUCAN, an ABC series. The actress launched a romantic liaison with Dr. Jack Garfield, "dentist to the stars," following his split with actress Jillian Keener. Jennings raved about "Dr. Jack" to all her girlfriends, prompting several to change dentists in hopes of, as one recalled, getting their "uppers pulled

and lowers filled." At some point, Garfield and Jennings were engaged.

Jennings spent part of October 1978 in Greece working on a shoot with Garfield in tow. Marilyn Grabowski was also along for the trip and recalled that Jennings developed a crush on the photographer. "She always had some drama going on with a man."

Renegade Canadian director David Cronenberg cast the thespian in *FAST COMPANY*, a drug-trip racing film based upon the life of champion driver Lonnie Johnson. Jennings played "Sammy," the long distance lover of a racer (William Smith) who has fallen out with his oil company sponsor. Shooting in Canada, Jennings couldn't wait to get back to L.A.

Following her return to Hollywood in late 1978, Hart observed that "Claudia was skin and bones. She got into a circle of people that made cocaine readily available in large quantities. She didn't handle it. It was a sad time. I saw her rather frequently, but there's nothing you can do for anybody who's kind of out of control. So that part was sad." After her relationship with Garfield fell apart, Jennings began dating businessman Jim Randall, who had split from his wife, actress Marisa Berenson.

The following spring, Jennings spoke again with Bruce Wilkinson, who had travelled west to write the story which would accompany her latest *Playboy* lay-out. Aiming for a gentler image, the actress revealed many of her true feelings as she reflected on her decade in Hollywood. "I see what's become of people who started out exactly when I did, and it's frightening. There are so many things to divert your energies. You can stay high all the time, party every night; there are a thousand traps."

Jennings was thrilled to be up for the role of Kate Jackson's replacement on the *CHARLIE'S ANGELS*

"Claudia was, like a lot of people at that time, doing drugs," says director Allan Arkush. "She was doing quite a bit of coke, and was a little 'glazed over' on the set."



Jennings in *DEAD-SPORT* (1978). Producer Roger Corman inspired a scene where the actress was tortured but substitute director Allan Arkush declined.

TV series. Following a very positive meeting with Aaron Spelling, she screen-tested on Wednesday, May 9th (along with a young unknown named Michelle Pfeiffer, who borrowed Jennings' shoes for her scene). Jennings knew she was very close to snatching the part. Over the next week she was "on tenterhooks," as the hands on the clock moved with cruel precision. When she finally received an answer from Spelling on the 15th, she was shocked to have lost the role to Charlis model Shelley Hack. It suddenly seemed as though the moon had come howling through the roof of her world.

In June, Jennings suddenly moved in with wealthy real estate broker/party-thrasher Stan Herman at his Malibu home off the Pacific Coast Highway. Her personal and career confidence spiraled lower as her relationship with Herman grew more tempestuous; both were strong-willed personalities, and they fought often. Herman, a powerful

and possessive man, became furious when he learned that Jennings had a new pictorial in the upcoming September issue of *Playboy*. "It was a control thing," explained Jacqui Cohen. "What had attracted him to her was that she was a *Playmate*. All the things that attract men at one point are the things they want to change later, right?"

Their falling out came to a head at Hugh Hefner's Midsummer Night's Dream Party on August 9th, where all the women traditionally dressed in lingerie. Herman stood by, seething, as the attendees congratulated Jennings on her new pictorial, which had just hit the stands. Eventually, the couple argued; Jennings left the party and spent the night at Jacqui Cohen's L.A. house. Sharnagne, a model, recalled, "We stayed up all night and that's when she realized that it was over with Stan."

Jennings moved back to her bungalow on Laurel Canyon, leaving many of her belongings at the beach house.

However, the relationship remained on again/off again over the coming months, and she continued to bounce between her places. Herman and the Sebastians' boat down in Marina del Rey, where the breezes blew kinder. She also spent more time than ever concentrating on her career. Jennings hoped to nail an "A" project before turning 30.

In September, she hired Fred Stout, Jr. the brother of one of her neighbors, to do some long-needed remodeling work at her house. Jennings had become friendly with Stout, and invited him to stay in one of the spare rooms while he worked on the place.

FAST COMPANY (1979) had debuted in the U.S. to zero success, and Jennings was more anxious than ever to change her on-screen image. Desperate to get something "good" going, she finally withdrew herself from the party scene.

Jennings was through blaming men, blaming her parents, blaming such producers, blaming the coke. She had always craved celebrity and powerful men, and she never asked herself why. She didn't know herself at all. The actress was so accustomed to others giving her everything, she never learned what she needed.

She thought she had created something original, this Claudia Jennings. But Claudia was just the same old Mimi bowed down in fealty to Hollywood. She had learned the esperanto and recast herself as a cliché, a walking male fantasy. She had squandered herself. She felt sick to her stomach.

Marilyn Grabowski remembered that in 1979, "Claudia was really studying and taking acting seriously. It seems to me that she was ready to turn a new chapter in her life." Step one was a clean break with Herman.

The sun had barely risen over the Santa Monica Mountains as Jennings drove up the Pacific Coast

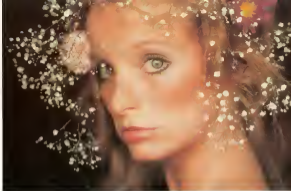
Highway the morning of October 3rd. Not having slept, she elected to keep her windows rolled down. "I will not be drawn into a confrontation with Stan," she repeated silently as she rubbed her eyes. She's just gather her things and leave.

At 8:58 a.m., as Jennings approached the intersection of Topanga Canyon Blvd., she felt sleepy; her car drifted across two left-turn lanes, and, defenselessly, into the path of an oncoming pickup truck. She opened her eyes in time to see the vehicle barreling toward her, and was frozen by a rush of nauseating terror. The VW's left front end was demolished on impact and the force of the crash spun the car around. She did not die instantly.

Todd McCarthy was on duty at Variety when word of Jennings' death came over the newswire. Stunned, he sat down and re-wrote the account as an obituary, working quickly before "the weirdness and grimness" of the situation could overtake him.

The telephone rang in Bobby Hart's home early that afternoon. It was Hugh Hefner's secretary. She had some terrible news about Jennings, and Hef had said to call him first. Hart felt something rise up inside him he had never known to exist. The voice on the other end of the line then suggested they leave it to him to contact Jennings' family. The Chestertons asked Hart to make the funeral arrangements:

Jennings among THE UNHAPPY ROLLERS. With a slim 5'10" stilled for music, Bobby Hart—then the record's boss—slipshod at the pic's music supervisor.



Jennings strikes a pose in July, '78. "People are always surprised to see that I'm healthy, well-educated and well-loved," she noted. "The casting directors have seen my movies, and they expect me to be some six-foot tall, aging barbarian."

he offered the grounds of the home he had shared with their daughter for the memorial service.

The following day, *The Los Angeles Times* reported the tragedy. Jennings had died at 9:15 as paramedics attempted to remove her from the wreck, while the truck's driver, 19-year-old Craig Bennell, suffered only minor injuries. Never reported, however, were the results of the medical examiner's investigation, which had been unable to detect any trace of alcohol or barbiturates in Jennings' blood.

Marilyn Grabowski remembered "being enraged when she died. I hadn't had that reaction with anyone

else before. I remember going out at night and just screaming. Claudia left an indelible impression on me. I never knew anyone who didn't like her, and I never knew any man who could resist her."

"We always referred to that last summer as 'The Summer of '78,'" said Shorogane. "In everyone's heart, it was the last year that we were children."

Jennings' memorial service was attended by over 300 mourners. "Stan Herman showed up briefly," Hart recalled, but after telescoping a few minutes of piercing glances, he left. Sally Kirkland officiated over part of the service, where many of Jennings' loved ones shared their reminiscences before her ashes were scattered at sea by The Neptune Society.

Hart agreed to serve as administrator of Jennings' estate, and petitioned the court to that effect on October 9th. He also received a call from Fred Stout, Jr. "He wanted to know how he was going to get paid for the work he had done," Hart remembered. "I said, 'Don't worry, you'll get paid out of the estate.'" Hart never heard from Stout again. During the same time that Stout split-up with Jennings, all of her

high-end audio gear disappeared from her house.

The Chestertons shunned all publicity following their daughter's death, and even hired an attorney to keep away the ghouls. As a consequence of their silence, poor news reporting and Jennings' reputation, the accident was widely understood to have been drug-related. It was a sad irony.

Todd McCarthy composed a moving personal tribute to the woman he knew for twelve years in *Roller Coaster*. Reflecting upon her decade-long sojourn in the Promised Land, he wrote of the similarities to a Harold Robbins novel. He concluded that for Mimi Chesterton, "there probably was no other path" than the lonely one-way road from Evanston.

Into Eternity

The years have not eased the grief of Jennings' family. Her mother, still understandably disconsolate, politely refused to be interviewed for this story. For her, Mimi's "terrible" association with *Playboy*—the catalyst for the L.A. odyssey—outweighs the significance of her offspring's film legacy. Clearly, in the opinion of the Chestertons, the road to

continued on page 80



AMANDA TAPPING

STARSGATE SGI

"I DON'T WANT MY CHARACTER TO BECOME THIS SCI-FI SEXPOT..."
SHE'S TAPPING INTO THE REFORMATION OF GENRE HEROINES.

By DOUGLAS EBY

Speaking from the set of *STARSGATE SG-1* in Vancouver, Amanda Tapping notes the series—making the transition into its second year—has been picked up for an additional two seasons: a total of 88 episodes. "So we have a long way to go. I'm absolutely enjoying the evolution of the show," she says. Discussing the genesis of her character, Captain Samantha Carter—aka Sam—Tapping notes, "I wasn't even a thought in their minds when they were creating her. But I hope that once they decided to cast me, that there's a certain amount of me that they're bringing in, in terms of sense of humor. And I think they've sort of been testing us all in certain episodes to see what they can do with our characters, and mine has been going off on an interesting track."

Tapping recalls the pilot episode was "very much 'Let's get to know who these people are' and Carter comes across as very strong, very committed... I would say something of a hard-ass in that she feels she has to prove something to these men she's dealing with. And as the show has progressed, that's no longer an issue and they're allowing Carter



Tapping as *STARSGATE SG-1*'s Captain Carter. No stranger to the genre, the actress also appeared in episodes of *MILLIONAIRE*, *DOOSEDUMPS* and *X-FILES*.

more sensitivity, which is really nice."

Born in England and raised in Toronto, Tapping earned visibility via guest appearances in prime time (*DUE SOUTH*, *FOREVER KNIGHT*, *THE X-FILES*, *FLASH FORWARD*, etc.). A graduate of the University of Windsor School of Dramatic Art, her theatrical credits include *Steel Magnolias*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *Look Back in Anger*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. "Live theatre was my love of training," she explains. "I'd love to be able to do theater during the hiatus. For me, as an actor, getting back on stage really works those muscles all over again. It's a different style of acting. It's scary to get up on stage. But I miss it like crazy." During one Christmas break, Tapping performed in an episode of *THE OUTER LIMITS* and enjoyed a respite with her spouse, though the couple found enough "leisure" time to relocate to Vancouver.

Tapping is optimistic about the development of her heroine in *STARSGATE*'s second season. "They're going to open up Samantha Carter's technical expertise a little more, and allow that to shine through. She is, after all, an astrophysicist in a show about space. And I think they're going to flesh



"I didn't want Carter to come across as this cold, hard-assed bitch," explains Tapping. "I would hope people see she is a confused human being of great warmth."

out our relationships a bit more. The beauty of the show is that the four SG-1 members have such a great personal chemistry; hence, they didn't really have to work on that because we all jelled so well as actors and human beings.

"In terms of Carter, hopefully they'll get a little more interested in what's happening in her personal life. She's the only one who doesn't have a family, or a history of ex-wife or ex-husband. She's a single, determined young woman. So they're fleshing that out a bit. In the first season, they gave me a great episode where I find a little girl on a planet, and you get to see this other side of Carter in terms of her mothering instincts and her ability to love, and her need for love. And it was really lovely to play that. They're giving me more episodes where I get to be a little bit more sensitive, and a little more human in

terms of raw emotion which is really nice."

As a theoretical astrophysicist and Pentagon expert, Carter articulates "scientific" jargon which Tapping admits was initially challenging: "I did a lot of research, as much as you could in the time that you have, on astrophysics and the military. I had the op-

portunity to talk with an ex-Navy Seal, and we had people from the Air Force consult on our show. And now, it's pretty easy because I actually understand what Carter's saying. The first episode was a lot of "technobabble." It wasn't difficult in terms of understanding the concepts, but they throw a lot of terminology at you

and you have to make it as real as possible."

The actress recounts that her education was more centered on biological training than physics: "I excelled in math when I was younger, and then got to high school and got more interested in the arts. I won an environmental science award when I graduated from high

Tapping and the STARGATE ensemble: "The beauty of the show is the four SG-1 members have such a great chemistry!"





Tapping and a delirious G. Thomas Howell in "The Joining" episode of *THE OUTER LIMITS*. "According to the crew, it's one of the grossest episodes they've done."

school, but also won a drama award. My parents were going [chanting] 'science science.' And my middle brother is a biochemist and my twin brother is a computer programmer. They take care of that end of things [laughs]. I always had this inkling I'd like to be a doctor when I was younger and then, of course—like everyone else—I wanted to be a marine biologist but acting was always in the forefront."

Tapping is intrigued with the reformation of science fiction into scientific fact: "Just reading Steven Hawking's books! I mean, his knowledge! And going back to Einstein and Copernicus, and back in time, the theories are now becoming reality. The whole evolution of science and our expanding knowledge—and then what we incorporate in the show—blows my mind because it's actually not so far off the mark."

Tapping leads with a *STARDATE* guest: "It's nice to get mail from young girls who say it's great to see a female scientist who is both, strong & successful."



"The idea of Area 51 and the government coverup, and 'how much do they know that we don't?' and all the conspiracy theories—I find all that fascinating, that stuff really gets me going. And I think it would be incredibly arrogant to think we were the only 'intelligent beings in a vast universe.' It's arrogant to think we're the only intelligent beings on Earth. We have a lot to learn from the animal kingdom."

Shifting back to her role on the TV series, Tapping reminds me that her character's "human element should come through. I think it's happened over the course of the first season, and it will certainly continue to happen. I remember when I first auditioned for the show, there were several ways you could play her. As a personal choice, I decided to invest her with some sense of humor, and some warmth and levity. I didn't

want her to come across as this hard-assed, fir want of a better word, bitch...this cold-hearted, terribly focused, singularly determined young woman who had nothing going for her but this knowledge that she had. It was really important for me that people saw beyond that into her warmth."

And, sure, she's apt to gauge audience reaction but "it's a mistake sometimes for me to go on the Internet, because I take what people are saying about the character to heart. When the show first came out, there were comments about 'Who is this Carter? We don't like her. She's bitchy.' And it really hurt my feelings. And I went, 'No, no, she's really nice, she's funny, you just haven't seen it yet.' But now, the comments are changing. I don't go on the Internet very often, but I would hope people see she is a very centered human being and that there is a great warmth to this woman...and that she has an incredible depth of caring for the other characters. The feelings that this team has for each other are so strong."

Women have not interpreted Carter as an ice queen; on the contrary, the comely captain has been perceived as a role model. "It's been really nice," smiles Tapping. "When we first started doing the show, Christopher Judge [Tad's] and Michael Shanks [Daniel Jackson] and I were wondering what kind of fan mail we might get. I kind of laughed at the whole idea of someone sending me a fan letter, it was so completely alien to me. But we decided that Christopher would get little kids who find his character fascinating—he would have his own demographics—and Michael would get young women who think he's a big, sensitive hunk. And they looked at me and said, 'Little boys and women.' And true to form, these are the letters I've been getting. Some are from men, which is nice. But quite a few are from

"I don't want to be this gender politician, but there is a lack of understanding on how to write an equal female character that isn't too sexy or bitchy or smart."



"This whole idea of Area 51 and the government coverage, and 'how much do they know that we don't?' and the conspiracy theories. I find it all fascinating."

women. It's especially encouraging when you get letters from young girls, who specifically say it's great to see a female scientist who's strong and successful. I say, 'Hey for me it's wonderful if it makes you take your science class a little more seriously, or maybe talk to your teachers more seriously about science and have them treat you more seriously.'"

Tapping is also inclined to infuse Carter with some femininity. "I'd like to have her not just be this strong, determined person but I'd like to see some of the more female elements of Carter come out. Not that I'd want that to weaken her, but show that she's a caring, emotional and sexual be-

ing. I don't want her to become this sci-fi sexpot by any stretch of the imagination. But I'd like to bring out more facets of her." While conceding there's a deficiency of "role models for women" in popular culture, Tapping notes, "It's changing. If we were to be completely honest, the industry is controlled by men for the most part, and I think there is an incredible lack of understanding. I don't want to become this big gender politician, and 'rae-rae, women,' but there is a lack of understanding of how to write an equal female character that isn't either way over the top, too sexy or bitchy smart. You see it so much with all the male characters. I'm not

standing on my soapbox here, saying we've got to change the face of television...but there is still something of a gender war going on.

In regard to the flexibility of female-driven characters, Tapping acknowledges that "the writers and producers on STARGATE SG-1 are completely in tune with that ideology. A year ago, as an unknown actor to walk into a room of men and say, 'Well, you know, I think you should do this with her'—the prospect was absolutely terrifying. But now, I can say, 'You know what? Women don't really talk that way'—and they listen! And I don't even have to say it; they're just writing wonderfully for her. There is a really nice understanding."

She describes her OUTER LIMITS episode, titled "The Joining," as "really funny because the character is not dissimilar to Sam Carter, even down to her wardrobe. So it wasn't a big stretch but I got to work with C. Thomas Howell, and Jeffrey Jones, which was phenomenal. It's about a young woman working for a space program. Her fiancé is at a Venus outpost; there have been problems there and we go there to find him, assuming he'll be dead but he's not. So the show centers around how he was able to keep himself alive for so long. There are some nice emotional beats to play, in terms of having your fiancé come back to Earth and not be able to touch him, then the realization of what he's done to keep himself alive which is quite horrific. According to the crew, it's one of the grossest episodes they've done. I was really proud of that."

Whenever she distances herself from the sound stage, Tapping writes for a Toronto comedy troupe that she organized with a couple of other women: "That's a great creative outlet. Our time is very limited, given the kind of hours we work. But it's great to get down to pen and paper again." □

FATALE ATTRACTIONS

continued from page 8

Franco initially presented that Diana De La Cruz, cast as Luanna, was a burlesque entertainer! "I was desperate," relates the co-director. "I couldn't find anybody who could act. I went through over 800 resumes and auditions. I had plenty of gorgeous women who couldn't act for beans, and I had tons of women who were okay as actresses but weren't femme fatales. So I went to strip clubs hoping to find somebody I'd leave my number with managers in the event that they might be able to suggest someone. I thought, for the first few weeks, that Diana was a stripper who was referred to me by a strip club; but she was actually recommended by one of my friends from college. Diana works at the Metropolitan Opera. She's this little petite thing with dark hair and dark skin, a tremendous contrast to Lisa's characterisation. The plot is like a very graphic comic book story line and a very mythic fairy tale type of thing."

The ravishing Michael Robbins ('7-13), *Playboy* model, co-stars. □

CLAUDIA JENNINGS

continued from page 8

Hollywood was the road to ruin for Mimi, and a waste of her talent and intellect.

Bobby Hart remained in that haze on Woodrow Wilson. He married in the 1960s. But he could still feel her. In the breeze which breathed through the darkening trees outside his windows, he could hear it whispered of that Escape wad of all those Februaries ago. In the closet, up in the attic, was where he kept it. A box. Her head shots and modeling photos, that copy of *New Women* that had made her so proud. Right beside his Boyce and Hart clippings. God, they were so young. She was gone now. He could still see her smile, though. She was cute, that one. He had waited for her.

Do not look for Mimi Chesterton on a windswept stretch of coastal road, or even in the innocent green eyes of a 19-year-old *Playboy* Playmate named Claudia. I have seen the eyes of those who loved her and I have found her there. If you dare not gaze so deeply, then look hard at the celluloid remnants of another era, and dream. □

Diana De La Cruz & Lisa Jane Lubben are the VAMPISH LESBIAN KICK-BOXERS. Co-director Val Franco rates the film as "Kind of homage to *Pansy Meyer*!"

LETTERS

TREK'S SEXY 50 (8:14)

Thank you for the "TREK's Sexy Fifty" in your April 7th issue. While I enjoyed the interviews and photos, I do have a gripe (or two) about Mark Altman's list.

Where's Kate Mulgrew, VOYAGER's "Captain Janeway"? As the leader of a ship trying to find its way home through the Delta Quadrant, she is a brave woman. You covered all of the other STAR TREK women who have been on the show the last 33 years. So why not Kate? And you also forget Denise Crosby, ST THE NEXT GENERATION's "Tasha Yar," although admittedly her stay on the show was a short one. Both of these women are intelligent and beautiful and, in my opinion, should have been included on your list!

Cathy Pike
Signal Hill, CA

I am typically in agreement with Mark Altman—but, beg, did he miss the target on his list of STAR TREK's Sexy Fifty (8:14)? His most egregious error is one that he seems proud of: the purposeful omission of Kate Mulgrew. Calling Kate "meat" is laughable when considering the dozen or so lifeless ladies he included in his final cut. I'm sure he's got Kate and so have I. Well, I can tell you she has not only a captivating personality but also a classy, tactile sexual appeal. Anyone can see she could show a fella a time he'd never forget. Waka up, Mark!

Johnny Sharp
Huntsville, AL
JSharp1701@aol.com

Re "TREK's Sexy Fifty" since Mark Altman not only cited the same actresses that qualify as my personal favorites, but also in virtually the same order! However, I believe that STAR TREK was also an animated series for a year (1973). I would have liked to have seen a sidebar on TREK's closest animated workmen.

Robert C. Becker, Jr.
Northford, CT

Just read your feature on TREK's Sexy Fifty, and would like to point out an important omission: the lovely and sexy Lianise Skard, who appeared in

"Requiem for Methuselah," Episode #26 of the original series (2/14/69), should have been up on that hot High up.

As long as I've got your attention, I'd like to see you do a cover and feature on Helen Slater, who played SUPERGIRL (1984).

On a final note, I've been searching for a tape on THE LOST EMPIRE, a 1985 action-fantasy starring Raven De La Croix. Could your readers help me?

Richard Desmond
Chicago, IL

DUSK TILL DAWN 3

In my opinion, the finale of FROM DUSK TILL DAWN III: THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER (8:13) seems to have been designed to discredit Esmerelda (the title character & child abuse victim) and make the Hangman (her father & abuser) look better in comparison. For instance, Remonada was totally unconcerned about the life of her rescuer, Madrid—let alone the other survivors—just before and after Quixote (her mother) transformed her into Santanito Pandemonium.

Then Esmerelda's father rescues Madrid and Antebec Bence from Remonada's wrath, and puts Madrid out of his bloodthirsty daughter's reach.

It inversely boils down to the fact that the Hangman, a child abuser, is strongly stoic—so as a sympathetic character? What were you thinking?

Michael Rollins
Fentonville, MN

VAMPI, BORRIE, JACKY

Way, way back in FF 48, (99- or woman) Barbara Leigh—who will be indelibly matched with her Vampirella alter ego—said she was going to write a "tell all" book about her personal life. Was the book published?

Keep us updated on beautiful Bobbie Phillips (SHOW-GIRLS): HER CARNIVAL OF SOULS remains my have been imperfect, but Bobbie's performance was flawless.

Your centerfold and photos of Jennifer O'Dell (7:14) were piping hot! New that she's



Jennifer O'Dell (7:14), a regular on THE LOST WORLD television series, has reunited with Femme Fatales for an interview & photo shoot.

landed a role on THE LOST WORLD (TV series), can we expect more of her sparking conversation and smoldering sex?

Finally, what's been shakin' with Cristi Harris (NIGHT OF THE DEMON 2), the wholesome/hot beauty whose pictures blistered FF 3:3?

Mark Christensen
Miami, FL

[Barbara Leigh's book, The King, McQueen and the Love Machine—referring to her liaison with Elton Freedy, Steve McQueen and MGM producer Jim "Smiling Cobra" Aubrey—is all in the Fall.

An updated interview with Jennifer O'Dell—with Jan Dean's lurid photography of the actress (above)—will be published this summer. Bobbie Phillips recently posed as one of this year's cover women.

Cristi Harris was out in the SUNSET BEACH series for one season (1998/'99) LURID TALKS, THE CASTLE QUEEN, a film she made in '84, will be released this year.]

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